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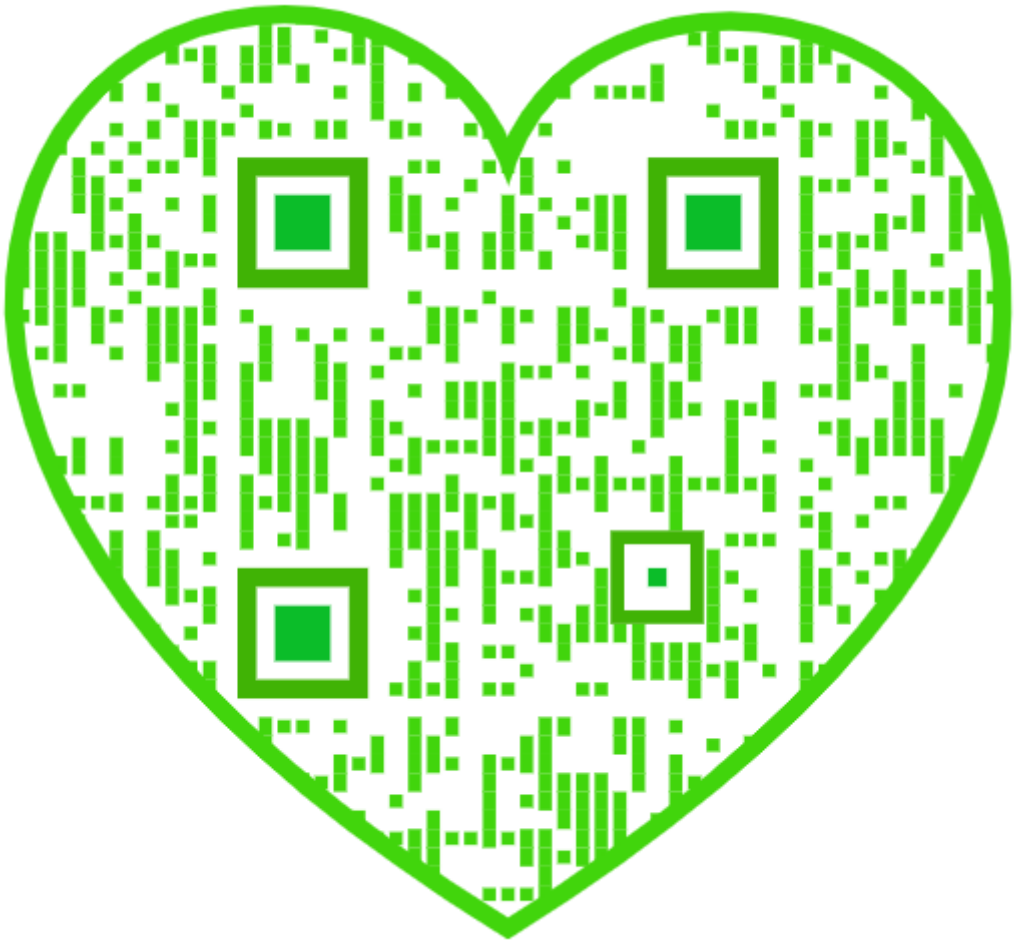

George Sumner
256

# LETTERS ON MESMERISM.

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# LETTERS

ON

# MESMERISM.

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BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

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# PREFACE.

In the month which has elapsed since these Letters were written, so much has occurred in relation to their subject,—so much has been seen, done, and learned by myself and others,—that I am more than ever aware of the superficial character of what I have written. This does not, however, make me for a moment doubt about obeying the call for its republication. A faithful narrative of first impressions of Mesmerism, and of the state of mind required by its disclosure, is needed and desired; and I give mine accordingly.

I give it unaltered, because, first, I consider it best to reserve for meditation what I have learned within the last month; and because, next, I see no reason to suppress any part of it. The narrative of J.'s somnambulism is objected to on opposite grounds, by those who are within and those who are without the pale of mesmeric belief and knowledge. For the first it is trite,—tells nothing but what is too familiar to be worth relating; for the second it is too wonderful,—so incredible as to startle them out of their previous belief of my own

narrative. Both these representations are well founded as facts; but not, in my opinion, as objections to my publishing the story. They do not affect my object,—which is not to convince A, B, and C, by what I am telling. The convictions of A, B, and C, would not be worth much, if they could be secured by the mere reading of a printed narrative of a single case. My aim is, what it always is in publishing, to utter what I know and think, secure of its reaching those whom it may concern, and uninterested as to its reception by those whom it does not. In the present case, this seems, after all, the surest way of convincing A, B, and C: for it incites many of the large number who know the wonders of Mesmerism to avow what they know, and thus brings out a quantity of testimony which would still have been concealed, if I had presumed to conjecture what amount of truth can or cannot be borne by my readers;—a conjecture or calculation whose insolence is intolerable to me even in the mere supposition.

Of the knowledge gained since these Letters were written, no part is more striking to me than that of the great extent of the belief and practice of Mesmerism. I had before a vague notion that the subject filled a large space in many enlightened minds, and formed a strong bond of sympathy among not a few philosophical and benevolent persons; and this impression was strengthened by the tone of medical literature, and the conduct of a portion of the medical profession. The

systematic disingenuousness of some Medical Journals on this subject, and the far-fetched calumnies and offensive assumptions with which it is the regular practice of a large number of the Faculty to assail every case of cure or relief by Mesmerism, looked very much as if they were in conflict with powerful truth, and as if they knew it. But these broad hints of the real state of the case had not prepared me for what I now know of the spread of Mesmerism. The last month has been, to my Mesmerist and myself, one of hard work, of such pressure of business as we have hardly experienced before. But it is a joyous labour,—one which has exhilarated our hearts and strengthened our hands, by enabling us to counsel, guide, or at least sympathise with the sick and suffering, and make common cause with some of their physicians; and by opening to us new prospects of the good to come through the association of believers in Mesmerism, hitherto scattered, but now likely to be brought into co-operation. By correspondence with these parties, and by the visits and conversation of others who have come from far and near to investigate and observe the phenomena occurring here, we find the cause so strong, that we begin to regard with some definiteness the means by which it may be still further advanced.

There is a remarkable uniformity in the letters I have received from medical gentlemen, from various parts of the country, each believing himself almost the only one who has ventured upon the practice of Mesmerism,

either from scientific curiosity, or from the failure in particular instances of all other means,—each having two or three valuable cases to report,—and each suffering under the experience or apprehension of ill-will from his professional brethren, from the hour of his avowing any belief in Mesmerism. Some of these have courage to brave any consequences for themselves, and are rewarded, I trust, by finding that people in general are more disposed to receive the truths of Mesmerism than is usually imagined : but, as to an avowal in print, by the publication of their cases, the difficulties have hitherto been too great. Besides the natural reluctance to come forward alone, a humane and gentlemanly feeling towards their patients keeps them silent,—prevents their exposing their charge to the impertinences and injurious imputations which, however despised by all, and recognised by all as the sure tokens of a weak cause, all have not the nerve to encounter. Now, if these medical gentlemen knew how far they are from being alone,—if they could be brought into mutual communication, they might not only aid and support each other in their study and use of this great curative agency, but they might furnish, in concert, such an array of facts as must command the attention of the profession,—if not directly, indirectly through the public demand. I privately register the names and addresses of such as have written to me; and I am persuaded that if these, and the many more who must exist, could find some means of greeting each other, in

order to put their facts together, they are strong enough to take possession of high and safe ground, and bring the profession,—at least the rising medical generation,—up to their own standing.

Next occurs the important consideration of the deficiency of educated Mesmerists. The most painful thought now daily forced upon us is that, while the sufferers are so many, the Mesmerists are so few. But observation teaches us that, in human society, the work never waits long for the workman. In this instance the want is very pressing,—more pressing every day; and this alone would indicate to us that means of supply would soon be forthcoming;—but we have another assurance in the knowledge that the elements of the supply are all abundant, and only wait to be brought together. There is the mesmeric power,—there is the desire for employment,—there is the heart of charity on the one hand, and the ability and readiness to instruct on the other. Moreover, there are floating ideas in many good heads of establishments in London where the able and willing may resort to have their powers tested and trained. From what has been said to me within the last month, I have no doubt that if such an establishment were opened,—if only half a dozen Mesmerists were to meet for mutual information, trial, and practice,—there would presently be such an accession of numbers and force as would meet much of the existing need. A succession of Mesmerists and nurses would go out from thence,—men and women of education and

of experience in their function,—who would first directly, and then as a consequence, change the aspect of half the sick-rooms of the land. That this will be done, I hope and anticipate. I should feel it an honour to aid in such an object by any means in my power.

In the *Critic* of Oct. 15, p. 121, there is an account of a proposed and commenced association for the purpose of philosophical and practical investigation of the subject, already joined by medical men, barristers, and clergymen; their meetings to take place once a fortnight, for the communication of facts, and ideas, and arrangement of means of inquiry into new facts;—for purposes, in short, of systematic investigation. When to this is added the one remaining instrument needed, and already in contemplation—a literary organ for the philosophical Mesmerists, the truth can hardly fail to make its way; and the quarrel about Mesmerism will be shifted to some other ground than the early question whether it be true or not.

Such plans being afloat,—having occurred to so many minds in their isolated positions,—the question naturally occurs whether the hour has not arrived for combination. Is it not now the time for contemplative Mesmerists to communicate to each other their speculations, and for practical Mesmerists to give to the public a large number of the multitude of cases that it is known they have on their books? Cannot some rendezvous be appointed where those who have mesmeric power, and wish to administer it, may be instructed

how best to do so? Is not this the evident occasion for instituting that work, allowed by everybody to be urgently required,—raising the quality of the body of sick-nurses? There is no need to enlarge here on what sick-nurses in this country are, and on what all agree that they ought to be; nor on the numbers of educated and kindly-hearted women in society, who would thankfully betake themselves to such an occupation, if an opening were provided. I never heard a doubt expressed by any one about these things; and I have myself no doubt that the present pressing demand for practical Mesmerists indicates the best opening.

In reply to the host of inquirers who ask of me how they may learn about Mesmerism, I must first say that the immediate study of Nature is the best method. Let them inquire where enlightened mesmeric practice is going forward, get access to it, and study it with a quiet and candid mind. Books are a far inferior means of knowledge; but many can command no other; and, in reply to the entreaties of such, I will mention a few, not authoritatively, but because I happen to know them, or to have heard trustworthy recommendations of them.

The Zoist, the Quarterly publication of the London Mesmerists, best exhibits what is done in this country. Those who wish to know whether Mesmerism be true or not, will find the question completely settled by this publication.

Facts in Mesmerism, by Rev. C. H. Townshend.

Mesmerism and its Opponents, by Rev. George Sandby.

Bertrand's Du Magnétisme Animal en France, et des jugemens qu'en ont porté les sociétés savantes.

Gauthier's Introduction au Magnétisme, &c. &c.

Testes' Transactions du Magnétisme Animal.

Gauthier's Traité pratique du Magnétisme et du Somnambulisme.

Resimont's Le Magnétisme Animal considéré comme moyen Thérapeutique, &c.

Revue Magnétique.

These having, in their several ways, produced belief in Mesmerism, the next requisite is guidance in the practice of it. For this, no book can entirely avail; but none safer or more effectual can, I believe, be found than

Deleuze's Instruction Pratique sur le Magnétisme Animal.

All these may be had at Baillière's, Regent Street, and with these, information about all others.

H. M.

Tynemouth,
*Dec.* 19*th*.

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# LETTERS ON MESMERISM.

*November* 12. 1844

## LETTER I.

### MESMERIC EXPERIENCE.

It is important to society to know whether Mesmerism is true. The revival of its pretensions from age to age makes the negative of this question appear so improbable, and the affirmative involves anticipations so vast, that no testimony of a conscientious witness can be unworthy of attention. I am now capable of affording testimony; and all personal considerations must give way before the social duty of imparting the facts of which I am in possession.

Those who know Mesmerism to be true from their own experience are now a large number; many more, I believe, than is at all supposed by those who have not attended to the subject. Another considerable class consists of those who believe upon testimony: who find it impossible not to yield credit to the long array of cases in many books, and to the attestation of friends whose judgment and veracity they are in the habit of respecting. After these there remain a good many who amuse themselves with observing some of the effects of Mesmerism, calling them strange and unaccountable, and then going away and thinking no more about them; and lastly, the great majority who know nothing of the

matter, and are so little aware of its seriousness as to call it a "bore," or to laugh at it as nonsense or a cheat.

If nonsense, it is remarkable that those who have most patiently and deeply examined it, should be the most firmly and invariably convinced of its truth. If it is a cheat, it is no laughing matter. If large numbers of men can, age after age, be helplessly prostrated under such a delusion as this, under a wicked influence so potential over mind and body, it is one of the most mournful facts in the history of man.

For some years before June last, I was in the class of believers upon testimony. I had witnessed no mesmeric facts whatever; but I could not doubt the existence of many which were related to me without distrusting either the understanding, or the integrity, of some of the wisest and best people I knew. Nor did I find it possible to resist the evidence of books, of details of many cases of protracted bodily and mental effects. Nor, if it had been possible, could I have thought it desirable or philosophical to set up my negative ignorance of the functions of the nerves and the powers of the mind, against the positive evidence of observers and recorders of new phenomena. People do not, or ought not, to reach my years without learning that the strangeness and absolute novelty of facts attested by more than one mind is rather a presumption of their truth than the contrary, as there would be something more familiar in any devices or conceptions of men; that our researches into the powers of nature, of human nature with the rest, have as yet gone such a little way that many discoveries are yet to be looked for; and that, while we have hardly recovered from the surprise of the new lights thrown upon the functions and texture of the human frame by Harvey, Bell, and others, it is too soon to decide that there shall be no more as wonderful, and presumptuous in the extreme to predetermine what they shall or shall not be.

Such was the state of my mind on the subject of

Mesmerism six years ago, when I related a series of facts, on the testimony of five persons whom I could trust, to one whose intellect I was accustomed to look up to, though I had had occasion to see that great discoveries were received or rejected by him on other grounds than the evidence on which their pretensions rested. He threw himself back in his chair when I began my story, exclaiming, "Is it possible that you are bit by that nonsense?" On my declaring the amount of testimony on which I believed what I was telling, he declared, as he frequently did afterwards, that if he saw the incidents himself, he would not believe them; he would sooner think himself and the whole company mad than admit them. This declaration did me good; though, of course, it gave me concern It showed me that I must keep my mind free, and must observe and decide independently, as there could be neither help nor hindrance from minds self-exiled in this way from the region of evidence. From that time till June last, I was, as I have said, a believer in Mesmerism on testimony.

The reason why I did not qualify myself for belief or disbelief on evidence was a substantial one. From the early summer of 1839, I was, till this autumn, a prisoner from illness. My recovery now, by means of mesmeric treatment alone, has given me the most thorough knowledge possible that Mesmerism is true.

This is not the place in which to give any details of disease. It will be sufficient to explain briefly, in order to render my story intelligible, that the internal disease, under which I have suffered, appears to have been coming on for many years; that after warnings of failing health, which I carelessly overlooked, I broke down, while travelling abroad, in June 1839;—that I sank lower and lower for three years after my return, and remained nearly stationary for two more, preceding last June. During these five years, I never felt wholly at ease for one single hour. I seldom had severe pain;

but never entire comfort. A besetting sickness, almost disabling me from taking food for two years, brought me very low; and, together with other evils, it confined me to a condition of almost entire stillness,—to a life passed between my bed and my sofa. It was not till after many attempts at gentle exercise that my friends agreed with me that the cost was too great for any advantage gained: and at length it was clear that even going down one flight of stairs was imprudent. From that time, I lay still; and by means of this undisturbed quiet, and such an increase of opiates as kept down my most urgent discomforts, I passed the last two years with less suffering than the three preceding. There was, however, no favourable change in the disease. Everything was done for me that the best medical skill and science could suggest, and the most indefatigable humanity and family affection devise: but nothing could avail beyond mere alleviation. My dependence on opiates was desperate. My kind and vigilant medical friend,—the most sanguine man I know, and the most bent upon keeping his patients hopeful,—avowed to me last Christmas, and twice afterwards, that he found himself compelled to give up all hope of affecting the disease,—of doing more than keeping me up, in collateral respects, to the highest practicable point. This was no surprise to me; for when any specific medicine is taken for above two years without affecting the disease, there is no more ground for hope in reason than in feeling. In June last, I suffered more than usual, and new measures of alleviation were resorted to. As to all the essential points of the disease, I was never lower than immediately before I made trial of Mesmerism.

If, at any time during my illness, I had been asked, with serious purpose, whether I believed there was no resource for me, I should have replied that Mesmerism might perhaps give me partial relief. I thought it right —and still think it was right—to wear out all other means first. It was not, however, for the reason that

the testimony might be thus rendered wholly unquestionable,—though I now feel my years of suffering but a light cost for such result;—it was for a more personal reason that I waited. Surrounded as I was by relations and friends, who, knowing nothing of Mesmerism, regarded it as a delusion or an imposture,—tenderly guarded and cared for as I was by those who so thought, and who went even further than myself in deference for the ordinary medical science and practice, it was morally impossible for me to entertain the idea of trying Mesmerism while any hope was cherished from other means.

If it had not been so, there was the difficulty that I could not move, to go in search of aid from Mesmerists; and to bring it hither while other means were in course of trial was out of the question. After my medical friend's avowal of his hopelessness, however, I felt myself not only at liberty, but in duty bound, to try, if possible, the only remaining resource for alleviation. I felt then, and I feel now, that through all mortification of old prejudices, and all springing up of new, nobody in the world would undertake to say I was wrong in seeking even recovery by any harmless means, when every other hope was given up by all: and it was not recovery that was in my thoughts, but only solace. It never presented itself to me as possible that disease so long and deeply fixed could be removed; and I was perfectly sincere in saying, that the utmost I looked for was release from my miserable dependence on opiates. Deep as are my obligations to my faithful and skilful medical friend, for a long course of humane effort on his part, no one kindness of his has touched me so sensibly as the grace with which he met my desire to try a means of which he had no knowledge or opinion, and himself brought over the Mesmerist under whom the first trial of my susceptibility was made.

Last winter, I wrote to two friends in London, telling them of my desire to try Mesmerism, and en-

treating them to be on the watch to let me know if any one came this way of whose aid I might avail myself. They watched for me; and one made it a business to gain all the information she could on my behalf; but nothing was actually done, or seemed likely to be done, when in June a sudden opening for the experiment was made, without any effort of my own, and on the 22nd I found myself, for the first time, under the hands of a Mesmerist.

It all came about easily and naturally at last. I had letters,—several in the course of ten days,—one relating a case in which a surgeon, a near relative of mine, had, to his own astonishment, operated on a person in the mesmeric sleep without causing pain;—one from an invalid friend, ignorant of Mesmerism, who suggested it to me as a *pis aller*;—and one from Mr. and Mrs. Basil Montagu, who, supposing me an unbeliever, yet related to me the case of Ann Vials, and earnestly pressed upon me the expediency of a trial:—and, at the same time, Mr. Spencer T. Hall being at Newcastle lecturing, my medical friend went out of curiosity, was impressed by what he saw, and came to me very full of the subject. I told him what was in my mind; and I have said above with what a grace he met my wishes, and immediately set about gratifying them.

At the end of four months I was, as far as my own feelings could be any warrant, quite well. My Mesmerist and I are not so precipitate as to conclude my disease yet extirpated, and my health established beyond all danger of relapse; because time only can prove such facts. We have not yet discontinued the mesmeric treatment, and I have not re-entered upon the hurry and bustle of the world. The case is thus not complete enough for a professional statement. But, as I am aware of no ailment, and am restored to the full enjoyment of active days and nights of rest, to the full use of my powers of body and mind; and as many invalids, still languishing in such illness as I have recovered from,

are looking to me for guidance in the pursuit of health by the same means, I think it right not to delay giving a precise statement of my own mesmeric experience, and of my observation of some different manifestations in the instance of another patient in the same house. A further reason against delay is, that it would be a pity to omit the record of some of the fresh feelings and immature ideas which attend an early experience of mesmeric influence, and which it may be an aid and comfort to novices to recognise from my record. And again, as there is no saying in regard to a subject so obscure, what is trivial and what is not, the fullest detail is likely to be the wisest; and the earlier the narrative the fuller, while better knowledge will teach us hereafter what are the non-essentials that may be dismissed.

On Saturday, June 22nd, Mr. Spencer Hall and my medical friend came, as arranged, at my worst hour of the day, between the expiration of one opiate and the taking of another. By an accident, the gentlemen were rather in a hurry,—a circumstance unfavourable to a first experiment. But result enough was obtained to encourage a further trial, though it was of a nature entirely unanticipated by me. I had no other idea than that I should either drop asleep or feel nothing. I did not drop asleep, and I did feel something very strange. Various passes were tried by Mr. Hall; the first that appeared effectual, and the most so for some time after, were passes over the head, made from behind,—passes from the forehead to the back of the head, and a little way down the spine. A very short time after these were tried, and twenty minutes from the beginning of the *séance*, I became sensible of an extraordinary appearance, most unexpected, and wholly unlike anything I had ever conceived of. Something seemed to diffuse itself through the atmosphere,—not like smoke, nor steam, nor haze,—but most like a clear twilight, closing in from the windows and down from the ceiling, and

in which one object after another melted away, till scarcely anything was left visible before my wide-open eyes. First, the outlines of all objects were blurred; then a bust, standing on a pedestal in a strong light, melted quite away; then the opposite bust; then the table with its gay cover, then the floor, and the ceiling, till one small picture, high up on the opposite wall, only remained visible,—like a patch of phosphoric light I feared to move my eyes, lest the singular appearance should vanish; and I cried out, "O! deepen it! deepen it!" supposing this the precursor of the sleep. It could not be deepened, however; and when I glanced aside from the luminous point, I found that I need not fear the return of objects to their ordinary appearance while the passes were continued. The busts reappeared, ghost-like, in the dim atmosphere, like faint shadows, except that their outlines, and the parts in the highest relief, burned with the same phosphoric light. The features of one, an Isis with bent head, seemed to be illumined by a fire on the floor, though this bust has its back to the windows. Wherever I glanced, all outlines were dressed in this beautiful light; and so they have been, at every *séance*, without exception, to this day; though the appearance has rather given way to drowsiness since I left off opiates entirely. This appearance continued during the remaining twenty minutes before the gentlemen were obliged to leave me. The other effects produced were, first, heat, oppression and sickness, and, for a few hours after, disordered stomach; followed, in the course of the evening, by a feeling of lightness and relief, in which I thought I could hardly be mistaken.

On occasions of a perfectly new experience, however, scepticism and self-distrust are very strong. I was aware of this beforehand, and also, of course, of the common sneer—that mesmeric effects are "all imagination." When the singular appearances presented themselves, I thought to myself,—"Now, shall I ever believe

that this was all fancy? When it is gone, and when people laugh, shall I ever doubt having seen what is now as distinct to my waking eyes as the rolling waves of yonder sea, or the faces round my sofa?" I did a little doubt it in the course of the evening: I had some misgivings even so soon as that; and yet more the next morning, when it appeared like a dream.

Great was the comfort, therefore, of recognising the appearances on the second afternoon. "Now," thought I, "can I again doubt?" I did, more faintly; but, before a week was over, I was certain of the fidelity of my own senses in regard to this, and more.

There was no other agreeable experience on this second afternoon. Mr. Hall was exhausted and unwell, from having mesmerised many patients; and I was more oppressed and disordered than on the preceding day, and the disorder continued for a longer time; but again, towards night, I felt refreshed and relieved. How much of my ease was to be attributed to Mesmerism, and how much to my accustomed opiate, there was no saying, in the then uncertain state of my mind.

The next day, however, left no doubt. Mr. Hall was prevented by illness from coming over, too late to let me know. Unwilling to take my opiate while in expectation of his arrival, and too wretched to do without some resource, I rang for my maid, and asked whether she had any objection to attempt what she saw Mr. Hall do the day before. With the greatest alacrity she complied. Within one minute the twilight and phosphoric lights appeared; and in two or three more, a delicious sensation of ease spread through me,—a cool comfort, before which all pain and distress gave way, oozing out, as it were, at the soles of my feet. During that hour, and almost the whole evening, I could no more help exclaiming with pleasure than a person in torture crying out with pain. I became hungry, and ate with relish, for the first time for five years. There was no heat, oppression, or sickness during the *séance*,

nor any disorder afterwards. During the whole evening, instead of the lazy hot ease of opiates, under which pain is felt to lie in wait, I experienced something of the indescribable sensation of health, which I had quite lost and forgotten. I walked about my rooms, and was gay and talkative. Something of this relief remained till the next morning; and then there was no reaction. I was no worse than usual; and perhaps rather better.

Nothing is to me more unquestionable and more striking about this influence than the absence of all reaction. Its highest exhilaration is followed, not by depression or exhaustion, but by a further renovation. From the first hour to the present, I have never fallen back a single step. Every point gained has been steadily held. Improved composure of nerve and spirits has followed upon every mesmeric exhilaration. I have been spared all the weaknesses of convalescence, and carried through all the usually formidable enterprises of return from deep disease to health with a steadiness and tranquillity astonishing to all witnesses. At this time, before venturing to speak of my health as established, I believe myself more firm in nerve, more calm and steady in mind and spirits, than at any time of my life before. So much, in consideration of the natural and common fear of the mesmeric influence as pernicious excitement,—as a kind of intoxication.

When Mr. Hall saw how congenial was the influence of this new Mesmerist, he advised our going on by ourselves, which we did till the 6th of September. I owe much to Mr. Hall for his disinterested zeal and kindness. He did for me all he could; and it was much to make a beginning, and put us in the way of proceeding.

I next procured, for guidance, Deleuze's 'Instruction Pratique sur le Magnétisme Animal.' Out of this I directed my maid; and for some weeks we went on pretty well. Finding my appetite and digestion suffi-

ciently improved, I left off tonics, and also the medicine which I had taken for two years and four months, in obedience to my doctor's hope of affecting the disease, —though the eminent physician who saw me before that time declared that he had "tried it in an infinite number of such cases, and never knew it avail." I never felt the want of these medicines, nor of others which I afterwards discontinued. From the first week in August, I took no medicines but opiates; and these I was gradually reducing. These particulars are mentioned to show how early in the experiment Mesmerism became my sole reliance.

On four days, scattered through six weeks, our *séance* was prevented by visitors or other accidents. On these four days, the old distress and pain recurred; but never on the days when I was mesmerised.

From the middle of August (after I had discontinued all medicines but opiates), the departure of the worst pains and oppressions of my disease made me suspect that the complaint itself,—the incurable, hopeless disease of so many years,—was reached; and now I first began to glance towards the thought of recovery. In two or three weeks more, it became certain that I was not deceived; and the radical amendment has since gone on, without intermission.

Another thing, however, was also becoming clear: that more aid was necessary. My maid did for me whatever, under my own instruction, good-will and affection could do. But the patience and strenuous purpose required in a case of such long and deep-seated disease can only be looked for in an educated person, so familiar with the practice of Mesmerism as to be able to keep a steady eye on the end, through all delays and doubtful incidents. And it is also important, if not necessary, that the predominance of will should be in the Mesmerist, not the patient. The offices of an untrained servant may avail perfectly in a short case,—for the removal of sudden pain, or a brief illness; but,

from the subordination being in the wrong party, we found ourselves coming to a stand.

This difficulty was abolished by the kindness and sagacity of Mr. Atkinson, who had been my adviser throughout. He explained my position to a friend of his—a lady, the widow of a clergyman, deeply and practically interested in Mesmerism—possessed of great mesmeric power, and of those high qualities of mind and heart which fortify and sanctify its influence. In pure zeal and benevolence, this lady came to me, and has been with me ever since. When I found myself able to repose on the knowledge and power (mental and moral) of my Mesmerist, the last impediments to my progress were cleared away, and I improved accordingly.

Under her hands the visual appearances and other immediate sensations were much the same as before; but the experience of recovery was more rapid. I can describe it only by saying, that I felt as if my life were fed from day to day. The vital force infused or induced was as clear and certain as the strength given by food to those who are faint from hunger. I am careful to avoid theorising at present on a subject which has not yet furnished me with a sufficiency of facts; but it can hardly be called theorising to say (while silent as to the nature of the agency) that the principle of life itself—that principle which is antagonistic to disease—appears to be fortified by the mesmeric influence; and thus far we may account for Mesmerism being no specific, but successful through the widest range of diseases that are not hereditary, and have not caused disorganisation. No mistake about Mesmerism is more prevalent than the supposition that it can avail only in nervous diseases. The numerous cases recorded of cure of rheumatism, dropsy, cancer, and the whole class of tumours,—cases as distinct, and almost as numerous as those of cure of paralysis, epilepsy, and other diseases of the brain and nerves, must make any inquirer cautious of limiting his anticipations and experiments by any theory of exclusive

action on the nervous system. Whether Mesmerism, and, indeed, any influence whatever, acts exclusively through the nervous system, is another question.

A few days after the arrival of my kind Mesmerist, I had my foot on the grass for the first time for four years and a half. I went down to the little garden under my windows. I never before was in the open air, after an illness of merely a week or two, without feeling more or less overpowered; but now, under the open sky, after four years and a half spent between bed and a sofa, I felt no faintness, exhaustion, or nervousness of any kind. I was somewhat haunted for a day or two by the stalks of the grass, which I had not seen growing for so long (for, well supplied as I had been with flowers, rich and rare, I had seen no grass, except from my windows); but at the time, I was as self-possessed as any walker in the place. In a day or two, I walked round the garden, then down the lane, then to the haven, and so on, till now, in two months, five miles are no fatigue to me. At first, the evidences of the extent of the disease were so clear as to make me think that I had never before fully understood how ill I had been. They disappeared, one by one; and now I feel nothing of them.

The same fortifying influence carried me through the greatest effort of all,—the final severance from opiates. What that struggle is, can be conceived only by those who have experienced, or watched it with solicitude in a case of desperate dependence on them for years. No previous reduction can bridge over the chasm which separates an opiated from the natural state. I see in my own experience a consoling promise for the diseased, and also for the intemperate, who may desire to regain a natural condition, but might fail through bodily suffering. Where the mesmeric sleep can be induced, the transition may be made comparatively easy. It appears, however, that opiates are a great hindrance to the production of the sleep; but even so, the mesmeric influ-

ence is an inestimable help, as I can testify. I gave all my opiates to my Mesmerist, desiring her not to let me have any on any entreaty; and during the day I scarcely felt the want of them. Her mesmerising kept me up; and, much more, it intercepted the distress,—obviated the accumulation of miseries under which the unaided sufferer is apt to sink. It enabled me to encounter every night afresh,—acting as it does in cases of insanity, where it is all-important to suspend the peculiar irritation—to banish the haunting idea. What further aid I derived in this last struggle from Mesmerism in another form, I shall mention when I detail the other case with which my own became implicated, and in which, to myself at least, the interest of my own has completely merged.

It will be supposed that during the whole experiment, I longed to enjoy the mesmeric sleep, and was on the watch for some of the wonders which I knew to be common. The sleep never came: and except the great marvel of restored health, I have experienced less of the wonders than I have observed in another. Some curious particulars are, however, worth noting.

The first very striking circumstance to me, a novice, though familiar enough to the practised, was the power of my Mesmerist's volitions, without any co-operation on my part. One very warm morning in August, when everybody else was oppressed with heat, I was shivering a little under the mesmeric influence of my maid,—the influence, in those days, causing the sensation of cold currents running through me, from head to foot. "This cold will not do for you, ma'am," said M. "O!" said I, "it is fresh, and I do not mind it:" and immediately my mind went off to something else. In a few minutes, I was surprised by a feeling as of warm water trickling through the channels of the late cold. In reply to my observation, that I was warm now, M. said, "Yes, ma'am, that is what I am doing." By inquiry and observation, it became clear to me, that her

influence was, generally speaking, composing, just in proportion to her power of willing that it should be so. When I afterwards saw, in the case I shall relate, how the volition of the Mesmerist caused immediate waking from the deepest sleep, and a supposition that the same glass of water was now wine—now porter, &c., I became too much familiarised with the effect to be as much astonished as many of my readers will doubtless be.

Another striking incident occurred in one of the earliest of my walks. My Mesmerist and I had reached a headland nearly half a mile from home, and were resting there, when she proposed to mesmerise me a little—partly to refresh me for our return, and partly to see whether any effect would be produced in a new place, and while a fresh breeze was blowing. She merely laid her hand on my forehead, and, in a minute or two the usual appearances came, assuming a strange air of novelty from the scene in which I was. After the blurring of the outlines, which made all objects more dim than the dull gray day had already made them, the phosphoric lights appeared, glorifying every rock and headland, the horizon, and all the vessels in sight. One of the dirtiest and meanest of the steam tugs in the port was passing at the time, and it was all dressed in heavenly radiance—the last object that any imagination would select as an element of a vision. Then, and often before and since, did it occur to me that if I had been a pious and very ignorant Catholic, I could not have escaped the persuasion that I had seen heavenly visions. Every glorified object before my open eyes would have been a revelation; and my Mesmerist, with the white halo round her head, and the illuminated profile, would have been a saint or an angel.

Sometimes the induced darkening has been so great, that I have seriously inquired whether the lamp was not out, when a few movements of the head convinced me that it was burning as brightly as ever. As the

muscular power oozes away under the mesmeric influence, a strange inexplicable feeling ensues of the frame becoming transparent and ductile. My head has often appeared to be drawn out, to change its form, according to the traction of my Mesmerist ; and an indescribable and exceedingly agreeable sensation of transparency and lightness, through a part or the whole of the frame, has followed. Then begins the moaning, of which so much has been made, as an indication of pain. I have often moaned, and much oftener have been disposed to do so, when the sensations have been the most tranquil and agreeable. At such times, my Mesmerist has struggled not to disturb me by a laugh, when I have murmured, with a serious tone, "Here are my hands, but they have no arms to them:" "O dear! what shall I do? here is none of me left!" the intellect and moral powers being all the while at their strongest. Between this condition and the mesmeric sleep there is a state, transient and rare, of which I have had experience, but of which I intend to give no account. A somnambule calls it a glimmering of the lights of somnambulism and clairvoyance. To me there appears nothing like glimmering in it. The ideas that I have snatched from it, and now retain, are, of all ideas which ever visited me, the most lucid and impressive. It may be well that they are incommunicable—partly from their nature and relations, and partly from their unfitness for translation into mere words. I will only say that the condition is one of no "nervous excitement," as far as experience and outward indications can be taken as a test. Such a state of repose, of calm translucent intellectuality, I had never conceived of; and no reaction followed, no excitement but that which is natural to every one who finds himself in possession of a great new idea.

Before leaving the narrative of my own case for that of another, widely different, I put in a claim for my experiment being considered rational. It surely was so, not only on account of my previous knowledge of

facts, and of my hopelessness from any other resource, but on grounds which other sufferers may share with me;—on the ground that though the science of medicine may be exhausted in any particular case, it does not follow that curative means are exhausted;—on the ground of the ignorance of all men of the nature and extent of the reparative power which lies under our hand, and which is vaguely indicated by the term "Nature;"—on the ground of the ignorance of all men regarding the very structure, and much more, the functions of the nervous system;—and on the broad ultimate ground of our total ignorance of the principle of life,—of what it is, and where it resides, and whether it can be reached, and in any way beneficially affected by a voluntary application of human energy.

It seemed to me rational to seek a way to refreshment first, and then to health, amidst this wilderness of ignorances, rather than to lie perishing in their depths. The event seems to prove it so. The story appears to me to speak for itself. If it does not assert itself to all, —if any should, as is common in cases of restoration by Mesmerism,—try to account for the result by any means but those which are obvious, supposing a host of moral impossibilities rather than admit a plain new fact, I have no concern with such objectors or objections.

In a case of blindness cured, once upon a time, and cavilled at and denied, from hostility to the means, an answer was given which we are wont to consider sufficiently satisfactory: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Those who could dispute the fact after this must be left to their doubts. They could, it is true, cast out their restored brother; but they could not impair his joy in his new blessing, nor despoil him of his far higher privileges of belief in and allegiance to his benefactor. Thus, whenever, under the Providence which leads on our race to knowledge and power, any new blessing of healing arises, it is little to one who enjoys it what disputes are caused among observers

To him, the privilege is clear and substantial. Physically, having been diseased, he is now well. Intellectually, having been blind, he now sees. For the wisest this is enough. And for those of a somewhat lower order, who have a restless craving for human sympathy in their recovered relish of life, there is almost a certainty that somewhere near them there exist hearts susceptible of simple faith in the unexplored powers of nature, and minds capable of an ingenuous recognition of plain facts, though they be new, and must wait for a theoretical solution.

*November* 20. 1844

## LETTER II.

### MESMERIC OBSERVATION

When I entered upon my lodgings here, nearly five years ago, I was waited upon by my landlady's niece, a girl of fourteen. From that time to this, she has been under my eye; and now, at the age of nineteen, she has all the ingenuousness and conscientiousness that won my respect at first, with an increased intelligence and activity of affections. I am aware that personal confidence, such as I feel for this girl, cannot be transferred to any other mind by testimony. Still, the testimony of an inmate of the same house for so many years, as to essential points of character, must have some weight; and therefore I preface my story with it. I would add that no wonders of Mesmerism could be greater than that a person of such character, age, and position should be able, for a long succession of weeks, to do and say things, every evening, unlike her ordinary sayings and doings, to tell things out of the scope of her ordinary knowledge, and to command her countenance and demeanour, so that no fear, no mirth, no anger, no doubt, should ever once make her move a muscle, or change colour, or swerve for one instant from the consistency of her assertions and denials on matters of fact or opinion. I am certain that it is not in human nature to keep up for seven weeks, without slip or trip, a series of deceptions so multifarious; and I should say so of a perfect stranger, as confidently as I say it of this girl, whom I know to be incapable of deception, as much from the character of her intellect as of her *morale*. When it is seen, as it will be, that she has also told incidents which it is impossible she could have known by ordinary means, every person who really wishes to

study such a case, will think the present as worthy of attention as any that can be met with, though it offers no array of strange tricks, and few extreme marvels.

My Mesmerist and I were taken by surprise by the occurrence of this case. My friend's maid told her, on the 1st of October, that J. (our subject) had been suffering so much the day before, from pain in the head, and inflamed eye, that she (the maid) had mesmerised her; that J. had gone off into the deep sleep in five minutes, and had slept for twenty minutes, when her aunt, in alarm, had desired that she should be awakened. J. found herself not only relieved from pain, but able to eat and sleep, and to set about her business the next day with a relish and vigour quite unusual. My friend saw at once what an opportunity might here offer for improving the girl's infirm health, and for obtaining light as to the state and management of my case, then advancing well, but still a subject of anxiety.

J. had for six years been subject to frequent severe pain in the left temple, and perpetually recurring inflammation of the eyes, with much disorder besides. She is active and stirring in her habits, patient and cheerful in illness, and disposed to make the least, rather than the most, of her complaints. She had, during these six years, been under the care of several doctors, and was at one time a patient at the Eye Infirmary at Newcastle; and the severe treatment she has undergone is melancholy to think of, when most of it appears to have been almost or entirely in vain. She herself assigns, in the trance, a structural defect as the cause of her ailments, which will prevent their ever being entirely removed; but, from the beginning of the mesmeric treatment, her health and looks have so greatly improved, that her acquaintance in the neighbourhood stop her to ask how it is that her appearance is so amended. There was in her case certainly no "imagination" to begin with; for she was wholly ignorant of

Mesmerism, and had no more conception of the phenomena she was about to manifest than she has consciousness of them at this moment.

This unconsciousness we have guarded with the utmost care. We immediately resolved that, if possible, there should be one case of which no one could honestly say that the sleeping and waking states of mind were mixed. Our object has been, thus far, completely attained,—one harmless exception only having occurred. This was when, speaking of the nature and destiny of man, an idea which she "had heard in church" intruded itself among some otherwise derived, and troubled her by the admixture. On that occasion, she remarked afterwards, that she had been dreaming, and, she thought, talking of the soul and the day of judgment. This is the only instance of her retaining any trace of anything being said or done in the trance. Her surprise on two or three occasions, at finding herself, on awaking, in a different chair from the one she went to sleep in, must show her that she has walked; but we have every evidence from her reception of what we say to her, and from her ignorance of things of which she had previously informed us, that the time of her mesmeric sleep is afterwards an absolute blank to her. I asked her one evening lately, when she was in the deep sleep, what she would think of my publishing an account of her experience with my own,—whether she should be vexed by it. She replied that she should like it very much: she hoped somebody would let her know of it, and show it to her,—for, though she remembered when asleep everything she had thought when asleep before, she could not keep any of it till she awoke. It was all regularly "blown away." But if it was printed, she should know; and she should like that.

To preserve this unconsciousness as long as possible, we have admitted no person whatever at our *séances*, from the first day till now, who could speak to her on the subject. We shut out our maids at once; and

we two have been the constant witnesses, with a visitor now and then, to the number of about twelve in the whole.

It is a memorable moment when one first hears the monosyllable, which tells that the true mesmeric trance has begun—"Are you asleep?" "YES." It is crossing the threshold of a new region of observation of human nature. Then it goes on. "How long shall you sleep?" "Half an hour."—"Shall you wake of yourself, or shall I wake you?" "I shall wake of myself."—And so she did to a second, no clock or watch being near, but the watch in my hand. For some weeks she could always see the time, and foretell her own waking; but of late, in manifesting some new capabilities, she has lost much of this.

Nothing can induce her to say a word on a matter she is not perfectly sure of. She solemnly shakes her head saying, "I won't guess:—it won't do to guess." And sometimes, appealingly, "I would tell you if I could." "I'll try to see." "I'll do all I can," &c. When sure of her point, nothing can move her from her declarations. Night after night, week after week, she sticks to her decisions, strangely enough sometimes, as it appears to us; but we are not aware of her ever yet having been mistaken on any point on which she has declared herself. We ascribe this to our having carefully kept apart the waking and sleeping ideas; for it is rare to find somnambules whose declarations can be at all confidently relied on. If any waking consciousness is mixed up with their sleeping faculties, they are apt to guess—to amuse their fancy, and to say anything that they think will best please their Mesmerist. J.'s strict and uncompromising truthfulness forms a striking contrast with the vagaries of hackneyed, and otherwise mismanaged somnambules.

It soon became evident that one of her strongest powers was the discernment of disease, its condition and remedies. She cleared up her own case first, pre-

scribing for herself very fluently. It was curious to see, on her awaking, the deference and obedience with which she received from us the prescriptions with which she herself had just furnished us. They succeeded; and so did similar efforts on my behalf. I cannot here detail the wonderful accuracy with which she related, without any possible knowledge of my life ten and twenty years ago, the circumstances of the origin and progress of my ill-health, of the unavailing use of medical treatment for five years, and the operation of Mesmerism upon it of late. One little fact will serve our present purpose better. Soon after she was first mesmerised, I was undergoing my final severance from opiates—a serious matter to one who had depended so long and so desperately upon them. As I have said, I got through the day pretty well; but the nights were intolerable, from pain and nervous irritations, which made it impossible to rest for two minutes together. After four such nights, I believe my Mesmerist's fortitude and my own would have given way together, and we should have brought the laudanum bottle to light again, but for the bright idea, "Let us ask J.!" She said at once what my sufferings had been, and declared that I should sleep more and more by degrees, if I took —(what was as contrary to her own ordinary ideas of what is right and rational as to mine)—ale at dinner, and half a wine-glass full of brandy in water at night. I refused the prescription till reminded—"Remember, she has never been wrong." I obeyed; the fact being kept secret between us two, in order to try, every evening, J.'s knowledge and opinion. She always spoke and advised, in a confident familiarity with incidents known only to us two, and carried me steadily through the struggle. I lost my miseries, and recovered my sleep, night by night, till, at the end of the week, I was quite well, without stimulant or sedative. Nothing can be more remote from J.'s ordinary knowledge and thought than the structure of the human body, and the

remedies for disease: and, though I was well aware how common the exercise of this kind of insight is in somnambules—how it is used abroad as an auxiliary to medical treatment—I was not the less surprised by the readiness and peremptoriness with which a person, in J.'s position, declared, and gave directions about things which she is wholly ignorant of an hour after, and was, during the whole of her life before.

It is almost an established opinion among some of the wisest students of Mesmerism, that the mind of the somnambule mirrors that of the Mesmerist. Of course, this explains nothing of the operation of Mesmerism; but it is a supposition most important to be established or disproved. One naturally wishes to find it true, as it disposes of much that, with the hasty, passes for revelation of other unseen things than those which lie in another person's mind. It certainly is true to a considerable extent, as is pretty clearly proved when an ignorant child—ignorant, especially, of the Bible—discourses of the Scriptures and divinity when mesmerised by a clergyman, and of the nebulæ when mesmerised by an astronomer; but we have evidence in J. that this is, though often, not universally true. I will give an example of each:—

On Saturday, October 12, she had told us that she now "saw the shades of things" that she wanted to know, and that she should "soon see clearer." The next evening, she went into a great rapture about the "gleams" becoming brighter, so that she should soon see all she wished. The light came through the brain, —not like sunlight, nor moonlight;—"No, there is no light on earth like this:" the knowledge she got "comes astonishingly,—amazingly,—so pleasantly!" "How is the mesmerising done which causes this?"—"By all the powers at once."—"What powers?"—"The soul, and the mind, and the vital powers of the body." Then, as we inquired—"The mind is not the same as the soul. All are required in mesmerising but the mind most,

though Mesmerism is still something else."—"Those three things exist in every human being, (the soul, the mind, and the body,) separate from one another; but the faculties belonging to them are not the same in everybody; some have more, some less. The body dies, and the mind dies with it; but the soul lives after it. The soul is independent and self-existent, and therefore lives for ever. It depends upon nothing."

Here I prompted the question, "What, then, is its relation to God?" She hastily replied, "He takes care of it, to reunite it with the body at the day of judgment." Here I was forcibly and painfully struck with the incompatibility of the former and latter saying, not (as I hope it is needless to explain) from any waiting on her lips for revelations on this class of subjects, but because it was painful to find her faculties working faultily. As I felt this disappointment come over me, an expression of trouble disturbed J.'s face, so ineffably happy always during her sleep. "Stop," said she, "I am not sure about that last. All I said before was true —the real *mesmeric* truth. But I can't make out about that last: I heard it when I was awake,—I heard it in church,—that all the particles of our bodies, however they may be scattered, will be gathered together at the day of judgment; but I am not sure." And she became excited, saying that "it bothered her," what she knew and what she had heard being mixed up. Her Mesmerist dispersed that set of ideas, and she was presently happy again, talking of "the lights." This was the occasion on which some traces remained in her waking state, and she told a fellow-servant that she had been dreaming and talking about the day of judgment.

Now here her mind seemed to reflect those of both her companions, (though I was not aware of being *en rapport* with her). Her Mesmerist had it in her mind that a somnambule at Cheltenham had declared man to consist of three elements; and J.'s trouble at her own mingling of ideas from two sources seems to have been

an immediate echo of mine. Such an incident as this shows how watchful the reason should be over such phenomena, and explains the rise of many pretensions to inspiration. It requires some self-control for the most philosophical to look on a person of moderate capabilities and confined education, in the attitude of sleep, unaware of passing incidents, but speaking on high subjects with an animated delight exceeding anything witnessed in ordinary life;—it requires some coolness and command of self to remember that what is said may be of no authority as truth, however valuable as manifestation.

On the next occasion, she uttered what could not possibly be in the mind of any one of the four persons present. The anecdote is so inexplicable, that I should not give it but for my conviction that it is right to relate the most striking facts that come under my observation, positively declining to theorise. My friend and I have used every means of ascertaining the truth in this instance; and we cannot discover any chink through which deception or mistake can have crept in, even if the somnambule had been a stranger, instead of one whose integrity is well known to us.

The next evening (Monday, October 14th) J. did not come up as usual to our *séance*. There was affliction in the household. An aunt (by marriage) of J.'s, Mrs. A., a good woman I have long known, lives in a cottage at the bottom of our garden. Mrs. A.'s son, J.'s cousin, was one of the crew of a vessel which was this evening reported to have been wrecked near Hull. This was all that was known, except that the owner was gone to Hull to see about it. J. was about to walk to Shields with a companion to inquire, but the night was so tempestuous, and it was so evident that no news could be obtained, that she was persuaded not to go. But she was too much disturbed to think of being mesmerised. Next morning there was no news. All day there were flying reports,—that all hands were lost—that all were

saved—but nothing like what afterwards proved to be the truth. In the afternoon (no tidings having arrived) we went for a long drive, and took J. with us. She was with us, in another direction, till tea-time; and then, on our return, there were still no tidings; but Mrs. A. was gone to Shields to inquire, and if letters had come, she would bring the news in the evening. J. went out on an errand, while we were at tea,—no person in the place having then any means of knowing about the wreck; and on her return, she came straight up to us for her *séance*. Two gentlemen were with us that evening, one from America, the other from the neighbourhood. I may say here, that we noted down at the moment what J. said; and that on this evening there was the additional security of my American friend repeating to me, on the instant, (on account of my deafness,) every word as it fell.

J. was presently asleep, and her Mesmerist, knowing the advantage of introducing subjects on which the mind had previously been excited, and how the inspiration follows the course of the affections, asked, as soon as the sleep was deep enough, "Can you tell us about the wreck?" J. tranquilly replied, "Oh! yes, they're all safe; but the ship is all to pieces."

"Were they saved in their boat?"

"No, that's all to pieces."

"How then?"

"A queer boat took them off; not their boat."

"Are you sure they are all safe?"

"Yes; all that were on board: but there *was* a boy killed. But I don't think it is my cousin."

"At the time of the wreck?"

"No, before the storm."

"How did it happen?"

"By a fall."

"Down the hatchways, or how?"

"No, he fell through the rigging, from the mast."

She presently observed, "My aunt is below, telling

them all about it, and I shall hear it when I go down."

My rooms being a selection from two houses, this "below" meant two stories lower in the next house.

She continued talking of other things for an hour longer, and before she awoke, the gentlemen were gone. After inquiring whether she was refreshed by her sleep, and whether she had dreamed, ("No,") we desired her to let us know if she heard news of the wreck; and she promised, in all simplicity, that she would. In another quarter of an hour, up she came, all animation, to tell us that her cousin and all the crew were safe, her aunt having returned from Shields with the news. The wreck had occurred between Elsinore and Gottenberg, and the crew had been taken off by a fishing boat, after twenty-four hours spent on the wreck, their own boat having gone to pieces. She was turning away to leave the room, when she was asked,—

"So all are saved—all who left the port?"

"No, ma'am," said she, "all who were on board at the time: but they had had an accident before;—a boy fell from the mast, and was killed on the deck."

Besides having no doubt of the rectitude of the girl, we knew that she had not seen her aunt,—the only person from whom tidings could have been obtained. But, to make all sure, I made an errand to the cottage the next morning, well knowing that the relieved mother would pour out her whole tale. My friend and I encouraged her; and she told us how she got the news, and when she brought it to Tynemouth,—just as we knew before. "How glad they must have been to see you 'at ours'!" said I.

"O yes, ma'am:" and she declared my landlady's delight.

"And J.," said I.

"Ma'am, I did not see J.," said she, simply and rapidly, in her eagerness to tell. Then, presently,—"They told me, ma'am, that J. was up stairs with you."

Two evenings afterwards, J. was asked, when in the sleep, whether she knew what she related to us by seeing her aunt telling the people below? to which she replied, "No; I saw the place and the people themselves,—like a vision."

Such was her own idea, whatever may be the conjectures of others.

I have too little knowledge of Mesmerism to be aware whether the more important powers of somnambulism and clairvoyance abide long in, or can be long exercised by, any individual. I have heard of several cases where the lucidity was lost after a rather short exercise; but in those cases there was room for a supposition of mismanagement. The temptation is strong to overwork a somnambule; and especially when the faculty of insight relates to diseases, and sufferers are languishing on every side. The temptation is also strong to prescribe the conditions,—to settle what the somnambule shall or shall not see or do, in order to convince oneself or somebody else, or to gratify some desire for information on a particular subject. It is hard to say who was most to blame with regard to Alexis,—the exhibitor who exposed him to the hardship of unphilosophical requirements, or the visitors who knew so little how to conduct an inquiry into the powers of Nature, as to prescribe what her manifestations should be. The "failures," in such cases, go for nothing, in the presence of one clearly new manifestation. They merely indicate that there is no reply to impertinent questions. The successes and failures together teach that the business of inquirers is to wait upon Nature, to take what she gives, and make the best they can of it, and not disown her because they cannot get from her what they have predetermined. Strongly as I was impressed by this, when reading about Alexis, from week to week last spring, I still needed a lesson myself,—a rebuke or two such as our somnambule has more than once given us here. As soon as her power of indicating and prescrib-

ing for disease was quite clear to us, we were naturally anxious to obtain replies to a few questions of practical importance. We expressed, I hope, no impatience at the often repeated, "I'll try to see: but I can't make it out yet." "I shall not get a sight of that again till Thursday." "It's all gone:—it's all dark,—and I shall see no more to-night." We reminded each other of the beauty and value of her truthfulness, from which she could not be turned aside, by any pressure of our eagerness. But one evening out came an expression, which procured us a reproof which will not be lost upon us. She was very happy in the enjoyment of some of her favourite objects, crying out "Here come the lights! This *is* a beautiful light! It is the quiet, steady, *silent* light!" And then she described other kinds, and lastly one leaping up behind the steady light, and shining like the rays of the sun before the sun itself is visible. When this rapture had gone on some time, she was asked, "What is the use of these lights, if they show us nothing of what we want?" In a tone of gentle remonstrance, she said earnestly, "Ah!—but you must have patience!"

And patience comes with experience. We soon find that such extraordinary things drop out when least expected, and all attempts to govern or lead the results and the power are so vain, that we learn to wait, and be thankful for what comes.

The first desire of every witness is to make out what the power of the Mesmerist is, and how it acts. J. seems to wish to discover these points; and she also struggles to convey what she knows upon them. She frequently uses the act of mesmerising another person, as soon as the sleep becomes deep; and if not deep enough to please her, she mesmerises herself,—using manipulations which she can never have witnessed. Being asked about the nature of the best mesmeric efforts, she replied that every power of body and mind is used, more or less, in the operation; but that the

main thing is to desire strongly the effect to be produced. The patient should do the same.

"People may be cured who do not believe in the influence; but much more easily if they do."

"What *is* the influence?"

"It is something which the Mesmeriser throws from him; but I cannot say what."

And this was all that evening; for she observed, (truly) "It is a few minutes past the half hour; but I'll just sleep a few minutes longer."

"Shall I wake you then?"

"No, thank you; I'll wake myself." And she woke up accordingly, in four minutes more. Another evening, "Do the minds of the Mesmerist and the patient become one?"

"Sometimes, but not often."

"Is it then that they taste, feel, &c., the same things at the same moment?"

"Yes."

"Will our minds become one?"

"I think not."

"What are your chief powers?"

"I like to look up, and see spiritual things. I can see diseases; and I like to see visions."

When asked repeatedly whether she could read with her eyes shut, see things behind her, &c., she has always replied that she does not like that sort of thing, and will not do it:—she likes higher things. When asked how she sees them—

"I see them, not like dreams in common sleep,—but things out of other worlds;—not the things themselves, but impressions of them. They come through my brain."

"Mesmerism composes the mind, and separates it from the common things of every day."

"Will it hurt your Mesmerist?"

"It is good for her. It exercises some powers of body and mind, which would otherwise lie dormant.

It gives her mind occupation, and leads her to search into things."

"Can the mind hear otherwise than by the ear?"

"Not naturally; but a deaf person can hear the Mesmerist, when in the sleep;—not anybody else, however."

"How is it that you can see without your eyes?"

"Ah! that is a curious thing. I have not found it out yet."—Again, when she said her time was up, but she would sleep ten minutes longer,

"Shall I leave you, and mesmerise Miss M.?"

"No: I should jump about and follow you. I feel so queer when you go away! The influence goes all away.—It does so when you talk with another."

"What is the influence?" &c. &c., as before.

"I have seen a many places since I was mesmerised; but they all go away when I wake. They are like a vision,—not a common dream."

"How do you see these? Does the influence separate soul and body?"

"No: it sets the body to rest; exalts and elevates the thinking powers."

When marking, from her attitude and expression of countenance, the eagerness of her mind, and vividness of her feelings, and when listening to the lively or solemn tones of her voice, I have often longed that she had a more copious vocabulary. Much has probably been lost under the words "queer," "beautiful," "something," "a thing," &c., which would have been clearly conveyed by an educated person. Yet some of her terms have surprised us, from their unsuitableness to her ordinary language; and particularly her understanding and use of some few, now almost appropriated by Mesmerism. On one of the earliest days of her sleep, before we had learned her mesmeric powers and habits, she was asked one evening, after a good deal of questioning,

"Does it tire you to be asked questions?"

"No."

"Will it spoil your lucidity?"

"No."—Whereat I made a dumb sign to ask her what "lucidity" meant.

"Brightness," she instantly answered.

In the course of the day, her Mesmerist asked her carelessly, as if for present convenience, if she could tell her the meaning of the word "lucidity."

J. looked surprised, and said, "I am sure, ma'am, I don't know. I don't think I ever heard the word."

When asleep the next day, she was again asked,

"Does it hurt your lucidity to be asked many questions?"

"When not very deep in sleep, it does."

"What is lucidity?"

"Brightness, clearness, light shining through. I told you that yesterday."

"Have you looked for the word since?"

"No: and I shall not know it when I am awake."

Though usually disdaining to try to read with the eyes shut, &c., she has twice written when desired — (complaining, when her eyes were fast shut, and her chair was almost in the dark, that she could not see well, meaning that there was too much light,) and once she drew a church and a ship, about as well as she might have done it with open eyes. She drew the ship in separate parts, saying that she would put them together afterwards. In this latter case, her eyes were bandaged, as she complained it was so light she could not see; and then she complained that the pencil given her would not mark, and tried to pull out the lead further, not being satisfied till her strokes were distinct.

The only time, I think, that she has spoken of her own accord, was one evening when she burst into a long story of a woman who lived in Tynemouth two hundred years ago, who made "cataplasms" for the feet of a lame monk, and cured him; for which act he

requited her by denouncing her as a witch, and getting her ducked in the sea, and otherwise ill-used.

"Now," said she, to her Mesmerist, "this is the way they would have treated you then; and maybe burnt you; but they know better now."

She explained that she once read this in a book, "and just thought of it." At another time, she informed us that people now think bad things of Mesmerism; but they will understand it better, and find what a blessing it is.

When apologising for continuing to sleep when she knew her appointed time was up, she declared,

"I am so comfortable and so happy, I thought I would sleep five or ten minutes longer; but it is supper time; and I have to go to the shop over the way. I should frighten people if I burst into the street (laughing) with my eyes shut. So I 'll wake now."

"First, tell us if your speaking of other things will prevent your telling us of diseases."

"No: it is just as it comes;—they will all come round again."—She awoke directly.

Nothing is more obscure in our experiment with J., and, I believe, in most mesmeric cases, than the extent and character of the *rapport*, on which so much depends. At first, J. certainly heard and knew nothing of what was going on but from her Mesmerist, unless expressly put *en rapport* with another by the Mesmerist joining their hands. But, on scattered occasions afterwards, she heard sounds to which she was insensible in an earlier stage. A German piano, playing in the garden, just under the window, was unheard by her, on one of the early days of her somnambulism; while lately, some music in the next house set her suddenly to work to imitate all the instruments of an orchestra, and finally the bagpipes, which she imitates *con amore* whenever she is in a merry mood. The same music carried her in fancy into a ball-room; and we were favoured with the whole detail of who was there, and

with seeing at least, her dancing. On another occasion, she was disturbed and annoyed by a slight noise over head, saying that it thundered, and then that the house was coming down. What is more remarkable,—I have observed, of late, the influence of my own mind over her, while no *rapport* is purposely established between us, and she certainly hears nothing of what I say. Not only has she said things *à propos* to what I am silently thinking; but, for a succession of evenings, she awoke suddenly, and in the midst of eager talk, or of deep sleep with her eyes closed,—I being behind her chair,—on my pointing to the watch, or merely thinking determinately that it was time she was awake. As for her being awakened by the silent will of her Mesmerist, that is an experience so common, an effect so invariable, that we hardly think of recording it; but that she should ever, however irregularly, wake, for a succession of evenings, at the will of one not consciously *en rapport* with her, seems worthy of note, as unusual in mesmeric experiments.

Another incident is note-worthy in this connection. A gentleman was here one evening, who was invited in all good faith, on his declaration that he had read all that had been written on Mesmerism, knew all about it, and was philosophically curious to witness the phenomena. He is the only witness we have had who abused the privilege. I was rather surprised to see how, being put in communication with J., he wrenched her arm, and employed usage which would have been cruelly rough in her ordinary state; but I supposed it was because he "knew all about it," and found that she was insensible to his rudeness; and her insensibility was so obvious, that I hardly regretted it. At length, however, it became clear that his sole idea was (that which is the sole idea of so many who cannot conceive of what they cannot explain,) of detecting shamming; and, in pursuance of this aim, this gentleman, who "knew all about it," violated the first rule of mesmeric practice,

by suddenly and violently seizing the sleeper's arm, without the intervention of the Mesmerist. J. was convulsed, and writhed in her chair. At that moment, and while supposing himself *en rapport* with her, he shouted out to me that the house was on fire. Happily, this brutal assault on her nerves failed entirely. There was certainly nothing congenial in the *rapport*. She made no attempt to rise from her seat, and said nothing,—clearly heard nothing; and when asked what had frightened her, said something cold had got hold of her. Cold indeed! and very hard too!

One singular evidence of *rapport* between J. and her Mesmerist I have witnessed under such unexceptionable circumstances as to be absolutely sure of it. When J. was dancing, and taking this room for a ball-room, she took her Mesmerist for her partner, allowed herself to be conducted to a seat, &c., assuming a ball-room air, which was amusing enough in one with her eyes sealed up, as motionless as if they were never again to open. Being offered refreshment, she chose some mesmerised water, a glass of which was on the table, prepared for me. It seemed to exhilarate her, and she expressed great relish of the "refreshment." It struck us that we would try, another evening, whether her Mesmerist's will could affect her sense of taste. In her absence, we agreed that the water should be silently willed to be sherry the next night. To make the experiment as clear as possible, the water was first offered to her, and a little of it drank as water. Then the rest was, while still in her hands, silently willed to be sherry; she drank it off,—half a tumbler full—declared it very good; but, presently, that it made her tipsy. What was it? "Wine —white wine." And she became exceedingly merry and voluble, but refused to rise from her chair, or dance any more, or go down stairs, for she could not walk steady, and should fall and spoil her face, and moreover frighten them all below. I afterwards asked her Mesmerist to let it be porter the next night. J. knew

nothing of porter, it seems, but called her refreshment "a nasty sort of beer." Of late she has ceased to know and tell the time,—"can't see the clock-face," as she declares. The greatest aptitude at present seems to be for being affected by metals, and for the singular muscular rigidity producible in the mesmeric sleep.

When her arms or hands are locked in this rigidity, no force used by any gentleman who has seen the case can separate them; and in her waking state she has certainly no such muscular force as could resist what has been ineffectually used in her sleeping state. The rigid limbs then appear like logs of wood, which might be broken, but not bent; but a breath from her Mesmerist on what is called by some phrenologists the muscular organ, causes the muscles to relax, the fingers to unclose, and the limbs to fall into the attitude of sleep. During these changes, the placid sleeping face seems not to belong to the owner of the distorted and rigid limbs, till these last slide into their natural positions, and restore the apparent harmony.

Not less curious is it to see her inextricable gripe of the steel snuffers, or the poker, detached by a silent touch of the steel with gold. When no force can wrench or draw the snuffers from her grasp, a gold pencil-case or a sovereign stealthily made to touch the point of the snuffers, causes the fingers to unclasp, and the hands to fall. We have often put a gold watch into her hands, and, when the gripe is firm, her Mesmerist winds the gold chain round something of steel. In a minute or less occurs the relaxation of the fingers, and the watch is dropped into the hand held beneath. While grasping these metals she sometimes complains that they have burnt her.

She is now also becoming subject to the numbness, the kind of insensibility which has already been proved such a blessing to sufferers under severe pain, whether of surgical operations or disease. It seems as if she were going the whole round of phenomena. Where

it will end time must show; meanwhile, we have the pleasure of seeing her in continually improving health, and so sensible of the blessing as to be anxious to impart the knowledge and experience of it to others.

I have said nothing of Phrenology in connection with Mesmerism, though it is thought by those who understand both better than I do, that they are hardly separable. I have no other reason for speaking of Mesmerism by itself than that I am not qualified to give any facts or opinions on phrenological phenomena induced by Mesmerism. The only fact I have witnessed (probably because we do not know how to look for evidence) in the course of our experiment was amusing enough, but too isolated to base any statement on. J. appeared one day to be thrown into a paroxysm of order, when that organ was the part mesmerised. She was almost in a frenzy of trouble that she could not make two pocket-handkerchiefs lie flat and measure the same size; and the passion with which she arranged everything that lay awry was such as is certainly never seen in any waking person. This fit of order was curious and striking as far as it went; and this is all I am at present qualified to say.

We note that J. can tell nothing concerning any stranger; and that her insight appears clear in proportion as her affections are interested. We have tried her clairvoyance, by agreement with friends at a distance, strangers to her, and have failed, as we deserved. I hope we shall have the wisdom and self-command henceforth to prescribe nothing to a power so obscure, and, at present, beyond our dictation. We can summon and dismiss it, and may therefore contemplate it without fear. But we have no power over the nature of its manifestations. Our business, therefore, is humbly and patiently to wait for them: and, when obtained, diligently to use our reason in the study of them.

*November* 23. 1844

## LETTER III.

### SPIRIT OF INQUIRY.

I HAVE related the two cases which are absolutely known to me; and I shall refer to no more. If a few of the many who are now enjoying the results of mesmeric treatment would plainly relate exactly what they have felt and seen, putting aside all personal repugnance, and despising all imputations of egotism, &c., there would presently be more temper and more wisdom in the reception of the subject by many who have no knowledge upon it.

What should be the mind and temper of those who know the truth of Mesmerism, and of those who do not? These two classes appear to me to comprehend all: for I am not aware that any competent person has ever studied the facts without admitting their truth, under one name or another.

The celebrated French Commission of 1784, so much vaunted as the finishing foe of Mesmerism, till the Report of a second Commission, in 1831, advocated it, admitted the facts; denying only the theory with which they were saddled. No objections that I have heard or read of, go to touch the facts,—that a large variety of diseases have been cured by mesmeric treatment,—infirmities ameliorated or removed,—surgical operations rendered painless,—and a sympathy induced between two or more persons resembling no other relation known: —that a state of somnambulism is, in many patients, producible at pleasure, in which the mind is capable of operations impossible (as far as we know) in any other conditions; and that this state of somnambulism is usually favourable to the removal of disease, while no pernicious effects are traceable, under the ordinary pru-

dence used in administering all the powers of nature. These facts, I believe, are denied by none who have really investigated them.

The denial met with from those who have witnessed no course of mesmeric facts needs no notice. Opinion cannot exist where the materials are wanting. Those who have gathered no such materials may believe, on adequate testimony; but they are not competent to deny. The only ground on which such denial could be pretended,—natural impossibility,—clear contradiction to the ascertained laws of nature,—does not exist in regard to the discovery of a hidden power of nature. The only deniers who can claim attention are those who have looked into Mesmerism through a range of facts.

And these deny, not the facts which are the basis of the pretensions of Mesmerism, but everything else. They see imposture (though much less than they suppose), and they very properly denounce and expose it.—They see failures, and laugh or are indignant, forgetting that a thousand failures do not in the least affect the evidence of one success in the use of a power not otherwise attainable. Putting aside all acts of pretended prevision and insight which could come within the range of chance, one act of prevision or insight stands good against any number of failures. The deniers see performances got up by itinerant Mesmerists—shows to which people are admitted for money; and they naturally express disgust; but this disgust applies not to Mesmerism, but to its abuse by the mercenary. They see manifestations, bodily and mental, which exceed all their experience and preconceptions of human powers and methods,—and even contradict them; for few of us are aware how human experience and preconception are perpetually awaiting correction and amendment from the future:—they deny the cause and the means of such manifestations,—resort to extravagant suppositions of tortured persons assuming, against all inducements, an appearance of

ease and enjoyment,—of honest people becoming sudden knaves, against reason, conscience, and interest;—of ignorant people being possessed of preternatural hidden knowledge;—of scores and hundreds of children taken from the street, of simple and ignorant men and women in quiet homes, being all, invariably and without concert, found capable of such consummate acting, such command of frame and countenance, and fidelity to nature as were never equalled on the stage. They see the sick and suffering risen from the depths of disease, and enjoying health and vigour; and when it is not possible to deny the disease or the recovery (which, however, is attempted to the last moment) they give an old name to the agency,—call it Will or Imagination, and suppose they have denied Mesmerism. And so, when they see the lame walk, and the deaf hear, they talk of "predisposing causes," "efforts of Nature," and consider the matter disposed of. Extravagant theorists there are indeed connected, in more ways than one, with Mesmerism; it is a fault common on every hand; but assuredly the wildest theorists of all are they who assume many moral impossibilities in order to evade a fact before their eyes. Of the infinite ingenuity of denial all have enjoyed displays who, like me, have been raised up by Mesmerism. We all hear, from one side or another, that we were getting well a year ago, and would not exert ourselves;—that long-tried medicines began to act weeks or months after they were discontinued; that our diseases went away of themselves; that we are mistaken in believing ourselves well now; that it is not Mesmerism, but Will in the Mesmerist, and Imagination in ourselves, that has given us health. It is easy enough, if it were worth while, to answer these,—to bring evidence that we were ill at such a date, and show that we are well now;—to ask whether it is probable that in twenty or fifty cases of deep and hopeless disease, there should be "an effort of Nature," apart from Mesmerism, at the very moment that

Mesmerism is tried, and to ask what "an effort of Nature" means; to point out that if Will and Imagination can really make the deaf and dumb hear and speak, disperse dropsies, banish fever, asthma, and paralysis, absorb tumours, and cause the severance of nerve, bone, and muscle to be unfelt, we need not quarrel about words:—let these blessed results be referred to any terms you please: only, in that case, some new name must be found for the old understood functions of the Imagination and the Will.

Denial thus reaching only the means, and not the facts, it seems time for those who really pretend to a desire to know to consider what they must do next. Are they prepared with Newton's method,—to sit down patiently before the great subject, watching and waiting for knowledge to arise and come forth? Are they practised in the golden rule of inquiry, not to wish truth to be on the one side or the other? Is their temper as serious as is required by an occasion so solemn,—by an inquiry whether human beings have, in regard to each other, a health-giving, a life-reviving power, a stupendous power of volition,—a power of exciting faculties of prescience and insight, and some others too awful to be lightly named? O! when one considers the scope of this inquiry, the solemnity of the question, whether true or false,—the laugh of the ignorant, the levity of the careless, the scorn of the prejudiced, the hardness and perversity of the intellectually proud, sound in one's ears like the babble and false mirth of a mad-house! While we look back to Laplace, receiving all pertaining testimony from all time, and declaring to Chenevix, that, "applying to Mesmerism his own principles and formulas respecting human evidence, he could not withhold his assent to what was so strongly supported," we can but contrast with his the spirit and method of modern doctors, who undertake to prescribe the conditions of the phenomena of this mysterious power on the first occasion of their

attendance on it; and if their precious conditions are declined, or unfulfilled, denounce the whole as imposture or nonsense. Where Newton would have humbly watched the manifestations of Nature, and Laplace philosophically weighed the testimony of men, our modern inquirers instruct Nature what she shall do to obtain their suffrage; and, Nature not deigning to respond, they abide by their own negative ignorance, rather than the positive testimony of history and a living multitude. Cuvier speaks on Mesmerism; and who has more title to be listened to? He says:— "Cependant les effets obtenus sur des personnes déjà sans connaissance avant que l'opération commençât, ceux qui ont lieu sur les autres personnes après que l'opération même leur a fait perdre connaissance, et ceux que présentent les animaux, ne permettent guères de douter que la proximité de deux corps animés dans certaines positions et avec certains mouvements n'ait un effet réel, indépendant de toute participation de l'imagination d'une des deux. Il paraît assez clairement aussi que ces effets sont dus à une communication quelconque qui s'établit entre leurs systêmes nerveux." (Anatomie Comparée, tom. ii. p. 117. "Du systême nerveux considéré en action.") Contrast with Cuvier examining, inferring, and avowing, our London philosophers asking for a sign: exulting if none be vouchsafed; and if one be given, unable to see it through the blanket of their scepticism. One thing such inquirers have made plain to persons a degree wiser than themselves. Children and other superficial thinkers are puzzled at a few passages in the gospels about belief; passages which seem to them, if they dared say so, contrary to all sense and reason; those passages which tell that no sign was given, few mighty works were done, *because of* the unbelief of the people. To the inexperienced, this appears precisely the reason why more signs and wonders should be given. But another passage conveys

the reason: "Having eyes they see not, having ears they hear not, neither do they understand," &c. It is a deep philosophical truth, implied in these words, and established afresh during every process of great natural discovery, that simple faith is as necessary to the perception and reception of truth as sound reason; that intellectual pride and prejudice are as fatal to the acquisition of true knowledge as blind credulity. The very senses become false informers, the very faculties traitors, when the intellect has lost its rectitude of humility, patience, and loyalty to truth. The signs and wonders of science, like those of the great Teacher, are absolutely lost upon the insolent and sceptical, the Pharisees and Sadducees of every place and age, and should never be yielded to their requisition. They can avail at all only to the teachable; and they can avail fully only to those who believed before.

The true spirit in which inquirers should approach the experiments of Mesmerism is suggested by Laplace's words, in relation to our subject, in his Essay on Probabilities: "Nous sommes si loin de connaître tous les agens de la nature, et leurs divers modes d'action, qu'il serait peu philosophique de nier les phénomènes, uniquement parcequ'ils sont inexplicables dans l'état actuel de nos connaissances."

There being nothing palpably absurd on the face of the subject,—only strange, unthought-of, and overwhelming to minds unaccustomed to the great ideas of Nature and Philosophy, the claims of Mesmerism to a calm and philosophical investigation are imperative. No philosopher can gainsay this; and if I were to speak as a moralist on the responsibility of the *savans* of society to the multitude—if I were to unveil the scenes which are going forward in every town in England, from the wanton, sportive, curious, or mischievous use of this awful agency by the ignorant, we should hear no more levity in high places about Mesmerism,—no more

wrangling about the old or new names by which the influence is to be called, while the influence itself is so popularly used with such fearful recklessness.

Let the *savans* really inquire, and combine to do so. Experiment is here, of course, the only means of knowledge. Instead of objecting to this, that, and the other theory, (all, probably, being objectionable enough,) let all thought of theory be put away till at least some store of varied facts is obtained under personal observation. Few individuals have the leisure, and the command of Mesmerists and patients, necessary for a sound set of experiments. Though some see reason to believe that every human being has the power of exciting, and the susceptibility of receiving, Mesmeric influence, and thus a course of experiments might seem easy enough, it is not so, any more than it is easy for us all to ascertain the composition of the atmosphere, because the air is all about us. Many and protracted conditions are necessary to a full and fair experiment, though brief and casual feats suffice to prove that "there is something in Mesmerism." Under the guidance of those who best understand the conditions,—the brave pioneers in this vast re-discovery,—let the process be begun; and let it be carried on till it is ascertained whether a sound theory can or cannot be obtained. To ask for such a theory in the first place, is an absurdity which could hardly be credited but for its commonness. "Tell me what Mesmerism is first, and next what it pretends to, and then I will attend to it," has been said to me; and is said to many others who, declaring Mesmerism to be true, have no theory as to its nature,—no conjecture as to the scope of its operations. Some ask this in ignorance; others as an evasion. Wise inquirers will not ask it at all till a vast preparatory work is achieved, which it is both unphilosophical and immoral to neglect. There are hospitals among us, where it may be ascertained whether insensibility to extreme pain can be produced.

There are sufferers in every one's neighbourhood, whose capability of recovery by Mesmerism may be tested. And in the course of such benevolent experiments the ulterior phenomena of Mesmerism will doubtless occur, if they exist as commonly as is pretended. Let experience, carefully obtained, be wisely collected and philosophically communicated. If found untrue, Mesmerism may then be "exploded,"—which it can never be by mere ignorant scorn and levity. If true, the world will be so much the better. When we consider that no physician in Europe above forty years of age when Harvey lived believed in the circulation of the blood, we shall not look for any philosophical inquiry into Mesmerism from established members of the profession, whose business it is to attend to it; but happily, the young never fail. There is always a new generation rising up to emancipate the world from the prejudices of the last, (while originating new ones;) and there are always a few disinterested, intrepid, contemplative spirits, cultivating the calm wisdom and bringing up the established convictions of the olden time, as material for the enthusiasm of the new, who may be relied on for maintaining the truth till they joyfully find that it has become too expansive for their keeping. The truth in question is safe, whether it be called Mesmerism, or by another and a better name.

*November* 26. 1844

## LETTER IV.

### SPIRIT OF CONVICTION.

It may seem presumptuous in me to say anything about what the temper and conduct of believers in Mesmerism should be,—so many of them as were bravely and benevolently enduring opposition and injury, while I was quietly lying by, out of sight, and unqualified to join them, though steadily sympathizing with them. But my very position may perhaps enable me to see some considerations long left behind by the more advanced Mesmerists, and to indicate them for the benefit of novices, whose experience has not yet led them up to my point of view. Besides, I have now a very vivid experience of my own. While sympathy in my release from pain and my recovered enjoyment of life flows in abundantly, I still have cause to feel, as numbers have felt before me, that no one can sustain a Mesmeric cure with entire impunity. When I think of the insults inflicted on many sufferers, of the innocent and truthful beings who, after long disease and the deprivation of a limb, have in addition to bear the cruel imputation of being liars and cheats because they could not say they had suffered the pains of amputation, I feel as if I, and such as I, must be for ever dumb about such disbelief and misrepresentation as, for our small share, we meet with. But, without saying a word on that head, such experience may enable one to perceive and allege the things in the conduct of the disciples of Mesmerism, which act unfavourably on their cause. There never was a great cause yet which did not suffer by some or other of its friends; and while men are imperfect and frail, thus it will ever be. And again, there never were faithful asserters of a great

truth who were not glad to hear what are the difficulties and objections of those without—who were not willing to listen to the representations of the most superficial of novices, who, with nothing to say but what to them is trite, may yet revive a sense of the obstacles which beset the entrance of the subject.

I believe there is no doubt that the greatest of all injuries done to Mesmerism is by its itinerant advocates. This appears to be admitted by everybody but the itinerants themselves; and none lament the practice so deeply as the higher order of Mesmerists. Among the itinerants there are doubtless some honest men, as entirely convinced of the truth of what they teach and exhibit as the physician who refuses fees in Mesmeric cases, and the brethren and sisters of charity who sacrifice everything to do good by their knowledge and power in Mesmerism. But no man of enlarged views, of knowledge at all adequate to the power he wields, would venture upon the perilous rashness of making a public exhibition of the solemn wonders yet so new and impressive, of playing upon the brain and nerves of human beings, exhibiting for money on a stage states of mind and soul held too sacred in olden times to be elicited elsewhere than in temples, by the hands of the priests of the gods. This sacredness still pertains to these mysterious manifestations, as indicating secrets of human nature of which we have only fitful glimpses. It is true, the blame of their desecration rests with the learned men who ought to have shown themselves wise in relation to a matter so serious, and to have taken the investigation into their own hands. It is they who are answerable for having turned over the subject to the fanatical and the vulgar. It is they who have cast this jewel of knowledge and power into the lap of the ignorant; and no one can wonder that it is bartered for money and notoriety. The spectacle is a disgusting and a terrible one,—disgusting, as making a stimulating public show

of what cannot be witnessed in the quietest privacy without emotions of awe, and the strongest disposition to reserve;—and, terrible, as making common and unclean that which, at least at present, is sanctified by mystery, by complete unfitness for general use. It is urged that public exhibitions of mesmeric phenomena attract much attention to the subject, and cause many to become ultimately convinced, who might otherwise have had no knowledge of the matter. This may be true; but what an amount of mischief is there to set off against this! There is much more wonder, doubt, and disgust caused than conviction; and the sort of conviction so originated could, on the whole, be very well dispensed with. And there remains behind the social calamity of a promiscuous use of the ulterior powers of Mesmerism. When a general audience sees the thing treated as a curious show on a stage, what wonder that the ignorant go home and make a curious show of it there! While the wise, in whose hands this power should be, as the priesthood to whom scientific mysteries are consigned by Providence, scornfully decline their high function, who are they that snatch at it, in sport or mischief,—and always in ignorance? School children, apprentices, thoughtless women who mean no harm, and base men who do mean harm. Wherever itinerant Mesmerists have been are there such as these, throwing each other into trances, trying funny experiments, getting fortunes told, or rashly treating diseases. It would be something gained if the honest among these lecturers could be taught and convinced that they had better be quiet, and let the matter alone, rather than propagate Mesmerism by such a method. If they have not the means of advocating Mesmerism without taking money for it, they had better earn their bread in another way, and be satisfied with giving their testimony and using their powers, (as far as their knowledge goes, and no further) gratuitously at home. The duty of those who understand the seriousness of Mesmerism is, clearly

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to discountenance and protest against all such exhibitions, to discountenance all who originate, and all who attend them, as false to the truth sought, through incompetence or worse.

The very best of the mesmeric brotherhood are liable to fall into one ever-open snare. Everybody interested in a great discovery is under a strong temptation to theorise too soon; and those who oppose or do not understand Mesmerism are for ever trying to get us to theorise prematurely. From the first day that my experiment was divulged to the present, the attempt has been renewed, till the application to me to announce a theory has become so ludicrously common, that I am in no danger of falling into the trap. I have had, not only to refuse to propose even a hypothesis, but to guard my language so carefully as that by no pretence of an inference could any be ascribed to me. I could wish that all who, like myself, know personally but a few facts, (however clear,) were as careful about this as the occasion requires. Their notions of a transmission of a fluid, electric or other;—of a conditional excitement in human beings of a power of control or stimulus of their own vital functions;—of the mesmeric power residing in the Will of the Mesmerist, or in the Imagination or Will of the patient; of some sympathetic function, express but obscure, and assigned to some unexplored region of the brain,—these notions, and many more, may each suit the phenomena which have come under the notice of the expounders; but no one of them will hold good with all the facts that are established. The phenomena are so various, that it seems to me most improbable that we can yet be near the true theory; to say nothing of what is very obvious—that the suppositions offered are little but words. It would be time enough to show this, if the hypotheses would fit; but they do not. What becomes of the transmission of fluid when the Mesmerist acts, without concert, on a patient a hundred miles off? What becomes of the patient's power of Ima-

gination when he is mesmerised unconsciously? and of the operator's power of Will when the Mesmerist is uninformed and obedient, acting in the dark, under the directions of the patient? and so on, through the whole array of theories. Now, it happens every day, that when objectors overthrow an offered theory, they are held by themselves, and everybody else but the really philosophical, to have overthrown the subject to which it relates. Thus is Mesmerism perpetually, as people say, overthrown; and though it is sure to be soon found standing, as it was before, on its basis of facts, and daily strengthened by new facts, yet it is obscured for the moment by every passing fog of false reasoning that is allowed to envelope it.)

Much mischief is done by a rash and hasty zeal in undertaking cases of sickness or infirmity. Some of the most earnest believers, anxious to afford proof to others, lay their hands on sick or well, without duly considering whether they have health and power of body and mind, command of time, patience and means, and of such knowledge as will obviate hesitation and flagging, and consequent failure in the treatment. This is far too light a use to be made of a power sacred to higher purposes than those of curiosity or mere assertion. And there cannot be too serious a preparation for its purer and higher use—in the cure of disease. Ill-qualified agents are not permitted to administer any other great natural power; and why should we permit ourselves to administer this influence—to undertake to infuse health, to feed the vital principle, accepting any manifestations that may occur by the way, unless we know ourselves to be so strong in body and mind, so free from infirmity, so able to command leisure, as that we may reasonably hope that the fountain of our influence will not intermit? Persuasives to courage are little needed, for the sight of suffering inspires believers in Mesmerism with an almost irresistible desire to relieve the sick. There is abundance of benevolent impulse. What we want to make sure of

is, calm foresight in undertaking serious cases, and strenuousness of patience in carrying them on; and, moreover, a steady refusal to lay hands on sick or well for purposes of amusement, or victory over unbelievers. These conditions being secured, I believe Mesmerism to be invariably favourable in its operation, where it acts at all. I never heard of any harm being done by it, where as much prudence was employed as we apply in the use of fire, water, and food.

I will say little on one head, of which much is said to me—the tendency of the early holders of any discovery, or re-discovery, to overrate its influence on human affairs. The tendency is natural and common enough; and time alone can prove whether there is folly in the believers in Mesmerism being so excited and engrossed as they are by what they see and learn. I am in too early a stage of the investigation to be able to say anything that ought to be of weight on this head. I can only declare, while knowing myself to be in as calm, quiet, and serious a state of nerves and mind as I am capable of being, that I think it a mistake to say that Mesmerism will become merely one among a thousand curative means, and that it will not produce any practical changes in the mutual relations of human beings. From what I have witnessed of the power of mind over body, and of mind over mind, and from what I have experienced of the exercise of the inner faculties under the operation of Mesmerism, I am persuaded that immense and inestimable changes will take place in the scope and destiny of the individual human being on earth, and in the relations of all. If it were proposed as an abstract question, every one would admit that the human lot on earth might and must be incalculably altered by the bestowment on human beings of a new faculty, and also by such an exaltation of any existing faculty as must entirely change its scope and operation. The case is the same, if any occult inherent faculty becomes reachable—educible; and there are not a few

subjects of Mesmerism who know that either this is the case, or that an existing faculty is exalted above their own recognition. Of these, I am one. We do not expect credence when we say this; for, by the very conditions of the experience, it is incommunicable. It is no help to the communication to be met by the strongest faith and sympathy; for the very means of communication are absent. The language which might convey it does not exist; and the effort to explain ourselves is as useless and hopeless as for the born blind and deaf to impart to each other an experience of sounds and colours. Let me add, that it would be as reasonable for these blind and deaf to question each others' wits as for any who have never been mesmerised to doubt the sanity of those who come, calm and healthful, out of an experience of its ulterior states. My own conviction is, that when that region is purely attained, it is, and ever will be, found clear of all absurdities, delusions, and perturbations, where the faculties may enjoy their highest health and exercise. I make this avowal of what can never be substantiated in my favour for a practical object—that some one or more may be led to reflect on the origin of spurious claims to divine inspiration, such as have, through all time, arisen in the world. If any one thoughtful mind is led on to a better solution than the universal suppositions of madness and imposture, there is so much the more hope that pretensions to divine inspiration will be transmuted into something more true, and that much madness and imposture hitherto consequent on such pretensions may die out. I care nothing for any precipitate conclusions of the unaccustomed to such researches, in regard to my own wits, if I can lead one informed and philosophical intellect to consider afresh how little we yet comprehend of the words we are so often repeating, "We are fearfully and wonderfully made."

From a point of contemplation like this, can it be needful to glance aside at our danger of bearing our-

selves unworthily amidst the irritations of opposition and scorn that we have to encounter? It is most needful to do more than glance at this danger—to regard it steadily. If we firmly hold our convictions, we cannot at all times maintain, without an effort, the high ground on which they place us. It is new and painful to us to have our statements discredited to our faces—our understandings despised—some of our deepest sentiments and most solemnly-acquired knowledge made a jest of. Perhaps it is more painful still to find the facts for which we are the authorities twisted and misrepresented, instead of denied, and one of the most serious subjects that ever has occupied, or can occupy, the attention of mankind treated with a levity which, though we know it to be mere ignorance, is to us profaneness. I say "we" in this connexion, though I have met with less than my fair proportion of this kind of trial, owing to previous circumstances, which have no connexion with my present testimony. I say "we," because I wish to cast in my lot with my fellow-believers for the pains and penalties of faith in Mesmerism which yet remain, if indeed I may be permitted the honour of sharing them with the earlier confessors, who have suffered and sacrificed more in the cause than now remains to be suffered and sacrificed by any number of later disciples. I say "we," also, because I need, as much as any one, plain monitions as to the spirit in which the truths of Mesmerism ought to be held.

Seeing, as we do at times, how many there are who *cannot* believe in anything so out of their way—how many who *cannot* see what is before their eyes, or hear what meets their ears, or understand what offers itself to their understandings, through preconceptions and narrow and rigid habits of mind—how many who *cannot* retain the convictions of the hour, but go home and shake them all out of their minds on the way, or throw them overboard at the first jest they hear—how the

cold and passionless pass through life without any sense of its commonest, but deepest and highest mysteries;—knowing these things in our soberest moments, why cannot we bear them about with us amidst the oppositions we meet with in society? Why should we chafe ourselves because minds are not all of the same rank and quality, or interested in the same pursuits—as if truth could not wait to be apprehended, and privilege to be accepted? On behalf of the sick and mutilated, who, in addition to their pain and infirmity, have to bear insult and calumny, some indignation may be allowed; but for ourselves, we should be at once too humble and too proud to entertain it: too humble on the ground of our exceedingly imperfect knowledge, and too highly graced by our privilege of such knowledge as we have to deprecate the displeasure of others at our use of it. Though I have had more cause for grateful surprise at the candour and sympathy I have met with, than for regret at short-comings of temper among my friends, there was a season when the following words, in a letter from a friend (one who was restored to health through Mesmerism, when such an experience involved much more moral suffering than now), went to my heart with most affecting force:—"Is it needless (if so, forgive me) to beg you to seek patience when you find people will disbelieve their own eyes and ears? My experience is not less close or heartfelt than yours, though I had not to be relieved from actual pain. At first, it made tears come to my heart when others were not grateful in my way for my cure; and rather indignant was I too when they doubted my statements; but do not you be like what I was. [Would I were!] Why should we be believed more than those of old, who were disbelieved? and do not men act according to their natures? Is there child-like faith on the earth, any more in these than in former days? If there were, would not —— and —— have believed even poor honest me?"

A postscript to this letter carries us on to the thought of our privileges:—"I observe that you see and feel the *beauty* which it is useless to talk of to unbelievers." Yes, indeed! and when the word "compensation" rises to my lips, I put it down as an expression of ingratitude, — so little proportion can our vexations bear to our gains—so insignificant is this sprinkling of tares amidst the harvest to which we are putting our hands.

Perhaps it is better not to enter upon any account of what it is to see the purest human ministering that can be beheld—a ministering which has all affection, and no instinct in it—where the power follows the course of the affections, and proceeds with them "from strength to strength," the benevolence invigorated by its own good deeds, and invigorating in its turn the benign influence. Time, and a wise and principled use of this yet obscure power, will show how far it can go in spreading among the human family a beneficent and uniting ministration, by which a singularly close spiritual sympathy, enlightened and guarded by insight, may be attained. There is moral beauty, acting through physical amelioration, in the means, and the extremest conceivable moral beauty in the anticipated end. To witness and contemplate these means and this end is a privilege better indicated than expatiated on. Such brethren and sisters of charity as the world has yet known have won the reverence and affection of all hearts. There is beauty in the spectacle and contemplation of a new and higher order of these arising, to achieve, with equal devotedness, a more efficacious and a more elevated labour of love and piety.

A consideration more clearly open to general sympathy (at least, the general sympathy of the wise) is, that, through all time, the privilege rests with the believers, and not with those who, for any cause, cannot enter into new truth. Affirmative conviction is, here, as we may suppose it may be hereafter, the chief

of blessings, and the securest, when it is reached at once through the unclouded reason and the ingenuous heart. The possession of this blessing has oftentimes been found a treasure, for which it was easy to lose the whole world, and possible to meet persecution, isolation, the consuming of the body, and the racking of the affections, with steadiness and serenity. What ought now, then, to be complained of as the natural cost of our portion of this blessing? Complaint, regret, is not to be thought of. To know certainly any new thing of human nature, to believe firmly any great purpose of human destiny, is a privilege so inestimable, adds such a value to the individual life of each of us, such a sacredness to collective human existence, that the liabilities to which it subjects us should pervert our minds no more than motes should distort the sunbeams.

*Tynemouth, Nov.* 28, 1844.

## LETTER V.

### FREEDOM OF ACCEPTANCE.

MANY persons suppose that when the truth, use, and beauty of Mesmerism are established, all is settled; that no further ground remains for a rejection of it. My own late experience, and my observation of what is passing abroad, convince me that this is a mistake. I know that there are many who admit the truth and function of Mesmerism, who yet discountenance it. I know that the repudiation of it is far more extensive than the denial. It gives me pain to hear this fact made the occasion of contemptuous remark, as it is too often, by such as know Mesmerism to be true. The repudiation I speak of proceeds from minds of a high order; and their superstition (if superstition it be) should be encountered with better weapons than the arrogant compassion which I have heard expressed.

I own I have less sympathy with those who throw down their facts before the world, and then despise all who will not be in haste to take them up, than with some I know of, who would seriously rather suffer to any extent, than have recourse to relief which they believe unauthorised; who would rather that a mystery remained sacred than have it divulged for their own benefit; who tell me to my face that they would rather see me sent back to my couch of pain than witness any tampering with the hidden things of Providence. There is a sublime rectitude of sentiment here, which commands and wins one's reverence and sympathy; and if the facts of the history and condition of Mesmerism would bear out the sentiment, no one would more cordially respond to it than I—no one would have been

more scrupulous about procuring recovery by such means—no one would have recoiled with more fear and disgust from the work of making known what I have experienced and learned. But I am persuaded that a knowledge of existing facts clears up the duty of the case, so as to prove that the sentiment must, while preserving all its veneration and tenderness, take a new direction, for the honour of God and the safety of man.

Granting to all who wish that the powers and practice of Mesmerism (for which a better name is sadly wanted) are as old as man and society; that from age to age there have been endowments and functions sacred from popular use, and therefore committed by providential authority to the hands of a sacred class; that the existence of mysteries ever has been, and probably must ever be, essential to the spiritual welfare of man; that there should ever be a powerful sentiment of sanctity investing the subject of the ulterior powers of immortal beings in their mortal state; that it is extremely awful to witness, and much more to elicit, hidden faculties, and to penetrate by their agency into regions of knowledge otherwise unattainable:—admitting all these things, still the facts of the present condition of Mesmerism in this country, and on two continents, leave, to those who know them, no doubt of the folly and sin of turning away from the study of the subject. It is no matter of choice whether the subject shall remain sacred—a deposit of mystery in the hands of the Church—as it was in the Middle Ages, and as the Pope and many Protestants would have it still. The Pope has issued an edict against the study and practice of Mesmerism in his dominions; and there are some members of the Church of England who would have the same suppression attempted by means of ecclesiastical and civil law at home. But for this it is too late: the knowledge and practice are all abroad in society; and they are no more to be reclaimed than the waters, when

out in floods, can be gathered back into reservoirs. The only effect of such prohibitions would be to deter from the study of Mesmerism the very class who should assume its administration, and to drive disease, compassion, and curiosity into holes and corners to practise as a sin what is now done openly and guiltlessly, however recklessly, through an ignorance for which the educated are responsible. The time is past for facts of natural philosophy to be held at discretion by priesthoods; for any facts which concern all human beings to be a deposit in the hands of any social class. Instead of re-enacting the scenes of old—setting up temples with secret chambers, oracles, and miraculous ministrations—instead of reviving the factitious sin and cruel penalties of witchcraft, (all forms assumed by mesmeric powers and faculties in different times), instead of exhibiting false mysteries in an age of investigation, it is clearly our business to strip false mysteries of their falseness, in order to secure due reverence to the true, of which there will ever be no lack. Mystery can never fail while man is finite: his highest faculties of faith will, through all time and all eternity, find ample exercise in waiting on truths above his ken: there will ever be in advance of the human soul a region "dark through excess of light;" while all labour spent on surrounding clear facts with artificial mystery is just so much profane effort spent in drawing minds away from the genuine objects of faith. And look at the consequences! Because philosophers will not study the facts of that mental *rapport* which takes place in Mesmerism, whereby the mind of the ignorant often gives out in echo the knowledge of the informed, we have claims of inspiration springing up right and left. Because medical men will not study the facts of the mesmeric trance, nor ascertain the extremest of its singularities, we have tales of Estaticas, and of sane men going into the Tyrol and elsewhere to contemplate, as a sign from heaven, what their physicians ought to be able to report of at home as

natural phenomena easily producible in certain states of disease. Because physiologists and mental philosophers will not attend to facts from whose vastness they pusillanimously shrink, the infinitely delicate mechanism and organisation of brain, nerves and mind are thrown as a toy into the hands of children and other ignorant persons, and of the base. What, again, can follow from this but the desecration, in the eyes of the many, of things which ought to command their reverence? What becomes of really divine inspiration when the commonest people find they can elicit marvels of prevision and insight? What becomes of the veneration for religious contemplation when Estaticas are found to be at the command of very unhallowed—wholly unauthorised hands? What becomes of the respect in which the medical profession ought to be held, when the friends of the sick and suffering, with their feelings all alive, see the doctors' skill and science overborne and set aside by means at the command of an ignorant neighbour,—means which are all ease and pleasantness? How can the profession hold its dominion over minds, however backed by law and the opinion of the educated, when the vulgar see and know that limbs are removed without pain, in opposition to the will of doctors, and in spite of their denial of the facts? What avails the decision of a whole College of Surgeons that such a thing could not be, when a whole town full of people know that it was? Which must succumb, the learned body or the fact? Thus are objects of reverence desecrated, not sanctified, by attempted restriction of truth, or of research into it. Thus are human passions and human destinies committed to reckless hands, for sport or abuse. No wonder if somnambules are made into fortune-tellers,—no wonder if they are made into prophets of fear, malice, and revenge, by reflecting in their somnambulism the fear, malice, and revenge of their questioners;—no wonder if they are made even ministers of death, by being led from sick-bed to sick-

bed in the dim and dreary alleys of our towns, to declare which of the sick will recover, and which will die! Does any one suppose that powers so popular, and now so diffused, can be interdicted by law, — such oracles silenced by the reserve of the squeamish,—such appeals to human passions hushed, in an age of universal communication, by the choice of a class or two to be themselves dumb? No: this is not the way. It is terribly late to be setting about choosing a way, but something must be done; and that something is clearly for those whose studies and art relate to the human frame to take up, earnestly and avowedly, the investigation of this weighty matter;—to take its practice into their own hands, in virtue of the irresistible claim of qualification. When they become the wisest and the most skilful in the administration of Mesmerism, others, even the most reckless vulgar, will no more think of interfering than they now do of using the lancet, or operating on the eye. Here, as elsewhere, knowledge is power. The greater knowledge will ever insure the superior power. At present, the knowledge of Mesmerism, superficial and scanty as it is, is out of the professional pale. When it is excelled by that which issues from within the professional pale, the remedial and authoritative power will reside where it ought; and not till then. These are the chief considerations which have caused me to put forth these letters in the *Athenæum*;—an act which may seem rash to all who are unaware of the extent of the popular knowledge and practice of Mesmerism. The *Athenæum* is not likely to reach the ignorant classes of our towns; and if it did, the cases I have related would be less striking to them than numbers they have learned by the means of itinerant Mesmerists. The *Athenæum* does reach large numbers of educated and professional men; and I trust some of them may possibly be aroused to consideration of the part it behoves them to take.

As for the frequent objection brought against inquiry into Mesmerism, that there should be no countenance

of an influence which gives human beings such power over one another, I really think a moment's reflection, and a very slight knowledge of Mesmerism, would supply both the answers which the objection requires. First, it is too late, as I have said above; the power is abroad, and ought to be guided and controlled. Next, this is but one addition to the powers we have over one another already; and a far more slow and difficult one than many which are safely enough possessed. Every apothecary's shop is full of deadly drugs—every workshop is full of deadly weapons—wherever we go, there are plenty of people who could knock us down, rob and murder us; wherever we live, there are plenty of people who could defame and ruin us. Why do they not? Because moral considerations deter them. Then bring the same moral considerations to bear on the subject of Mesmerism. If the fear is of laying victims prostrate in trance, and exercising spells over them, the answer is, that this is done with infinitely greater ease and certainty by drugs than it can ever be by Mesmerism; by drugs which are to be had in every street. And as sensible people do not let narcotic drugs lie about in their houses, within reach of the ignorant and mischievous, so would they see that Mesmerism was not practised without witnesses and proper superintendence. It is a mistake, too, to suppose that Mesmerism can be used at will to strike down victims, helpless and unconscious, as laudanum does, except in cases of excessive susceptibility from disease; cases which are, of course, under proper ward. The concurrence of two parties is needful in the first place, which is not the case in the administration of narcotics; and then the practice is very uncertain in its results on most single occasions; and again, in the majority of instances, it appears that the intellectual and moral powers are more, and not less, vigorous than in the ordinary state. As far as I have any means of judging, the highest faculties are seen in their utmost perfection during the mesmeric sleep; the inno-

cent are stronger in their rectitude than ever, rebuking levity, reproving falsehood and flattery, and indignantly refusing to tell secrets, or say or do anything they ought not; while the more faulty then confess their sins, and grieve over and ask pardon for their offences. The volitions of the Mesmerist may actuate the movements of the patient's limbs, and suggest the material of his ideas; but they seem unable to touch his *morale*. In this state the *morale* appears supreme, as it is rarely found in the ordinary condition. If this view is mistaken, if it is founded on too small a collection of facts, let it be brought to the test and corrected. Let the truth be ascertained and established; for it cannot be extinguished, and it is too important to be neglected.

And now one word of respectful and sympathising accost to those reverent and humble spirits who painfully question men's right to exercise faculties whose scope is a new region of insight and foresight. They ask whether to use these faculties be not to encroach on holy ground, to trespass on the precincts of the future and higher life. May I inquire of these, in reply, what they conceive to be the divinely appointed boundary of our knowledge and our powers? Can they establish, or indicate, any other boundary than the limit of the knowledge and powers themselves? Has not the attempt to do so failed from age to age? Is it not the most remarkable feature of the progress of Time that, in handing over the future into the past, he transmutes its material, incessantly and without pause, converting what truth was mysterious, fearful, impious to glance at, into that which is safe, beautiful, and beneficent to contemplate and use: a clearly consecrated gift from the Father of all to the children who seek the light of his countenance? Where is his pleasure to be ascertained but in the ascertainment of what he gives and permits, in the proof and verification of what powers he has bestowed on us, and what knowledge he has placed within our reach?

While regarding with shame all pride of intellect, and with fear the presumption of ignorance, I deeply feel that the truest humility is evinced by those who most simply accept and use the talents placed in their hands; and that the most childlike dependence upon the Creator appears in those who fearlessly apply the knowledge he discloses to the furtherance of that great consecrated object, the welfare of the family of man.

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

# APPENDIX.

"I have said nothing of Phrenology," &c.—Page 38.

Since these Letters were written, phenomena have presented themselves which leave no more possible doubt in the minds of witnesses of the truth of Phrenology than of that of Mesmerism. As I wish to leave to the Letters their original character of first impressions, I insert here the observations which are necessary, in order to be just to Phrenology: and I shall give no more than are necessary to this object, because I wish to reserve for study the bulk of the new appearances which have presented themselves.

By degrees, as her Mesmerist became more experienced, J. manifested the passions and emotions, and expressed the kinds of ideas excited by touching the best-ascertained organs of the brain. Nothing can be conceived more beautiful than her countenance and gestures when Veneration, Benevolence, Ideality, and Hope are made active; nor more ludicrous than Destructiveness in so mild and affectionate a personage;—nor more disagreeable than her descent from her higher moods, when Self-esteem and Love of Approbation are excited, and made to take the direction of care for her dress and appearance. But these appearances cannot be conveyed by description or assertion. I will give facts.

On Saturday evening, Dec. 22d, when she was deep in the trance, and therefore abundant in manifestations,

a lady present took a sudden fancy to speak to her in French,—when she instantly, and, as it were, mechanically, repeated in English what was said. This startled all present—(four persons)—for we knew that this girl had never been taught any language. The experiment was repeated again and again, and always with the same result. The finger of the Mesmerist was then on Imitation. When it was shifted to Language, J. did not repeat what was said, but replied to it. The lady and a physician present then spoke repeatedly in Italian; and with the same results, according as the one or the other organ was touched; and then Dr. —— spoke to her in German,—still with the same result.

The whole party did at first look aghast. When we came to reflect, however, how often she had replied to our thoughts, without the intervention of any language whatever, it seemed no more wonderful that she should read off our minds through languages which were unknown to her. It is indeed clear that, provided the ideas conveyed are within her scope, it matters nothing in what language they are uttered. She has only once since been deep enough for a repetition of this striking act: and that was on the next Friday, when she again replied to questions in French and German, put to her by a lady and gentleman present.

One evening, her Mesmerist touched at once Caution and Language, to see which would prevail,—whether she would be silent or yield to the enforcement to speak. The struggle was obvious; and it ended curiously. She put up her own hand to Firmness: and by this reinforcement of Caution, was enabled to keep silence.

When very deep, and active accordingly, and left alone to do what she likes, her predominant affections and emotions are of the purest kind, and most beautifully manifested, so as to inspire feelings of reverence in all who see her. Her attachment to her Mesmerist, and to a lady who is a patient of this kind Mesmerist, is strong, and, as freed from all conventional restraints

of expression, extremely interesting. One evening lately, when very happy, she drew near to these two ladies, put her arms about them, laid her head on their shoulders, and said, with a voice and countenance of affection and joy never to be forgotten, "We are one," —and the ladies felt that the honour rested with them.

While Mrs. ——— was being mesmerised, late one evening, when J. was deep and happy in the trance, and leaning near, to catch what she could of the influence, the other patient tranquilly observed, (with eyes closed as fast as J.'s), "How beautiful *that* is!"

"What is beautiful?" asked the Mesmerist.

"The bright light streaming from all your fingers."

"O!" said J., "do you only now see that? I have been watching it all this while."

I had often read and heard of "the fluid being seen" by somnambules. Mrs. ——— was not asleep, and this was the first occasion on which J. had spoken of the appearance.

I may now qualify what I said in the letters of J. being unable to tell anything concerning any stranger. As her powers improve, she becomes able—on rare occasions, which can never be anticipated—to discern, bit by bit, the disease of a person she never heard of, whose hair, sent under proper conditions, is silently put into her hands. This exercise appears to absorb her attention and interest more than any other. She renews the effort, time after time, sees more and more, and in one case appears to have penetrated the matter completely, declaring spontaneously, that the lady (whom she could never have heard of, and who is a stranger to us) was nearly blind, and must be treated in such and such a manner.

The scientific gentlemen who have watched this case, are most interested by the experiments with metals, as the most exact and nearly invariable. We have a persuasion that this is the avenue through which lies the most safe and direct path to a true theory of

Mesmerism. We are in possession of a good many facts under this head; but it is better to reserve them. I will only give the remark of a gentleman on the invariable spectacle of a somnambule throwing away steel, however firmly grasped before, the moment it is touched with gold,—and usually with complaints of being burnt. This gentleman observed how many conditions are requisite to a fair trial of mesmeric experiments, and how careless novices are of them,—pointing out how the shrinking of the muscles of entranced patients under surgical operations may happen, in consistency with their unconsciousness of the pain,—the instruments being all made of steel, and the operator having probably a gold ring on his finger, of whose agency in the experiment he never thinks.

The very preparation for philosophical experimenting is hardly begun, except among an exceedingly small number of trained observers.

TYNEMOUTH,
*January* 4, 1845.

THE END.

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